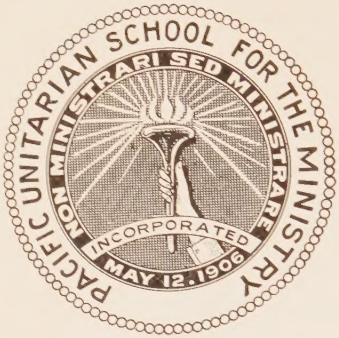

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THE

IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT SENTIMENTS

CONCERNING

THE PERSON OF CHRIST;

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

ESSEX CHAPEL, APRIL 10, 1806,

BEFORE THE LONDON UNITARIAN SOCIETY, FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE BY THE DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS.

BY

THOMAS BELSHAM.

Non, quia semel erratum est, ideo semper errandum esse.

CYPRIAN.

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A SERMON.

1 COR. VIII. 6, 7.

TO US THERE IS BUT ONE GOD, THE FATHER, OF WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND WE IN HIM; AND ONE LORD, (*master*) JESUS CHRIST, BY WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, AND WE BY HIM. HOWBEIT, THERE IS NOT IN EVERY MAN THAT KNOWLEDGE.

AN eminent divine of the established church in the last century, the celebrated Dr. Whitby, a learned and laborious commentator upon the christian scriptures, after having been for the greater part of life an able and a zealous advocate for the popular doctrine of the Trinity, upon more mature deliberation changed his sentiments as he advanced in years; and, with a candour and magnanimity truly exemplary, he drew up a retractation of his error, which he intended to publish, which however he did not live to print, but which he expressly ordered to

be given to the public after his decease. He begins with confessing, that "when he wrote his Commentaries, he went on too hastily in the common beaten road of other reputed orthodox divines. But I own," says he, "that I am not able to resist the shining evidence of truth, nor am I ashamed to confess my former mistakes and errors in these matters after such strong and irresistible conviction. And this my retractation," continues this truly honest and ingenuous ecclesiastic, "after all my former endeavours to assert and establish a contrary doctrine, deserves the more to be considered, because it proceeds, and indeed can proceed, from me for no other reason but purely from the strong and irresistible convictions which are now upon me that I was mistaken. Nothing but the love of truth can be supposed to extort such a retractation from me, who, having already lived so long beyond the common period of life," being then upwards of fourscore, "can have nothing else to do, but to prepare for my great change: and in order thereunto, to make my peace with God and my own conscience before I die. To this purpose I solemnly appeal to the searcher of hearts, and call God to witness, whether I have hastily or rashly departed from the common opinion, or, rather, whether I have not deliberately and calmly weighed the arguments on both sides, drawn from scripture and antiquity*."

Such was the declaration of this honest and vene-

* See Dr. Whitby's Preface to his Last Thoughts.

rable man, and such the testimony which he thought it his duty to bear to what he judged to be christian truth, after having devoted the labour of a long life to the pursuit of it. And I trust that I shall not be severely censured, if, following the example of this faithful confessor, in my humble measure I bear my grave and repeated testimony against what appear to me, after long and serious inquiry, to be the prevailing corruptions of the christian doctrine concerning the person of Jesus Christ: nor can it be thought irrelevant to the present occasion to spend a few moments in illustrating the reasonableness of the inquiry, and the importance of the subject. We shall thus learn whether those great and good men, who from time to time have entered their solemn protest against popular errors, who have devoted their lives to the instruction and reformation of the church, and to whose faithful and undaunted efforts in the midst of difficulties and dangers we stand indebted for all the light and knowledge we enjoy, are to be approved or condemned for their generous and active zeal; and whether *we* are employing that time to valuable purpose which we dedicate to the acquisition of christian truth, and to the correction of long-established error. This information is the more to be desired, as there are many who from indifference, from indolence, or from some other cause, declining to interest themselves in these inquiries, are willing to satisfy their minds with the notion that these subjects are of no importance,

and that the acquisition of christian knowledge is of little practical value.

To justify the exertions which others have made, and which I am desirous to recommend to every serious believer in the christian revelation, to obtain correct information concerning the person of Christ, I shall endeavour to demonstrate, first, that the question itself is of very considerable importance; secondly, that the solution of it is attended with some difficulty; and thirdly, that nevertheless complete satisfaction may be attained by those who are disposed to inquire seriously and impartially into the evidence of the case.

In the first place, some persons delight in representing this controversy as relating to a mere speculative opinion, meaning thereby, that the question concerning the person of Christ is of no practical importance, and consequently, that it is of no use to discuss it. And it must be acknowledged that a man, whether he be a trinitarian, an arian, or a unitarian, whether he be a tritheist, a sabellian, or a socinian, may be honest, temperate, and benevolent; he may be true to his word, faithful to his engagements, just and honourable in his transactions; he may be a good father, a good husband, a good friend, a good neighbour, a good magistrate, a good subject, and a good citizen:—and so he may, if he be a heathen, a mahometan, or an atheist. But shall we then say that christianity, and even theism, is a mere speculative question, and of no practical value? God forbid!

As christians, we believe that the religion of Jesus contains a correct code of moral and religious duty, and offers the most powerful motives to the practice of virtue. Christianity inculcates the love of God as well as the love of our neighbour, and the love of our neighbour as founded in, and fortified by, the love and fear of God. But common sense will teach us, that in order to secure the benefits of the christian religion it is of the utmost importance that we should distinctly understand its nature and design. We must study the doctrines and discoveries of the christian revelation, that we may learn to obey its precepts, to be governed by its motives, and to be elevated by its hopes.

It is the opinion of the bulk of professed christians that Jesus Christ, the founder of our holy religion, is the second person in a supposed trinity of divine persons, and that he is God independent on and equal with the Almighty Father. It is the opinion of others that Jesus is not indeed Supreme God, but a derived or created being, to whom all communicable attributes have been imparted by the Supreme, and who has been delegated by God to the high office of creating, sustaining, and governing the universe, or, which to every practical purpose is nearly the same, of the solar system, or of this world in which we dwell. Others are believers in the simple pre-existence of Christ; while some, who constitute I fear a very small proportion of the general body of believers, regard Jesus Christ

as a man in all respects similar to other men, only so far as he was distinguished from the rest of his brethren by divine communications, and is the greatest of all the prophets of God. Now can any one seriously maintain that these are mere speculative differences, questions of no practical value? If Jesus be God, is he not to be worshiped as God? If he be an inferior and delegated maker, is he not to be acknowledged as such? And if he be a prophet, is he not to be honoured as a prophet? I can never believe that it is a question of no importance to ascertain whether that Jesus whom we all agree to own and reverence as our Master, is a prophet or an angel, or a superangelic being, or a god.

1. The determination of this question will clear away the rubbish of much useless controversy. If we are once well and firmly settled in the true scriptural notion concerning the great apostle and high priest of our profession, that he is a man, and nothing more than a man, approved of God by signs and miracles, and gifts of the holy spirit, we instantly put a stop to all those nice and subtle questions to which erroneous conceptions concerning his person have given birth, and which have for ages divided and distracted the christian world. It is no longer a topic of debate whether the son be a self-existent, self-subsistent being, or a necessary emanation from the Father as the fountain of godhead; whether the distinction of persons in the divine essence be real or modal; how it is possible that three divine persons

should each of them possess every attribute of godhead so as to be absolute and perfect God, and yet that there should not be three gods but one God; how the first person of the trinity can send his equal, the second person of the trinity, into the world to be born and die; how the eternal God can become a helpless infant, and expire upon a cross; how a being can exist who is neither created nor uncreated; how the Supreme God can delegate his power of forming and governing the universe to a creature; how the supposed perfections of the Logos can become quiescent in a human body:—These questions and a thousand others which have tortured the wit and subtlety of men for seventeen centuries past, and which have often proved the occasion of fierce controversy and bloody persecution, are entirely superseded by the scripture doctrine of the proper humanity of Jesus Christ. This doctrine also puts a stop to all the intricate and angry controversies concerning what is called the atonement and satisfaction of Christ. For though some, who admit the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, do nevertheless plead for the doctrine of atonement in an obscure and qualified sense; yet the doctrine which they defend bears no relation nor resemblance to that mysterious and sublime speculation which the trinitarians contend for, who maintain that the Son appeased the anger of the Father, by suffering, either in quantity or value, the full amount of what the elect would have endured; nor even, to the less revolting but not better founded opinion, that the death of Jesus was an ex-

hibition of the evil nature and evil desert of sin; or that it was the great act of filial obedience, which was rewarded by the recovery of all mankind from the dominion of death. It is also evident that just notions concerning the person of Christ completely silence the celebrated controversy concerning general and particular redemption, or, in other words, whether the benefits of the death of Christ extend to all mankind, or belong to the elect only. In short, the doctrine of the simple humanity of Jesus Christ reduces the christian religion from a system of abstruse metaphysical jargon, to the standard of common sense; to a system of plain practical truth, equally intelligible and useful to persons of the meanest and of the highest capacity. It at once puts a stop to all those controversies which are really speculative, and useless, and endless, and leaves nothing but what is solid, substantial, and of the highest importance.

2. Just notions concerning the person of Christ relieve the mind from much painful embarrassment.

A practical trinitarian must always be in an uneasy state of mind. It is impossible that his ideas and his feelings should not be in continual confusion between the notions of one God and of three. Two perfect beings must be perfectly similar, and the ideas of them must be absolutely coincident, and indivisible. But trinitarians do not attend to this; and in their distinctions between the Father and the Son, they assign to the Father all the stern and terrible attributes of deity, and to the Son all the milder glories of the di

vine nature. The Father engrosses all their fear, and the Son all their love. This appears to be in fact the case, however they may deny it in words, and endeavour to disguise their feelings, and to impose upon themselves. A similar embarrassment pervades all their acts of religious worship, in which addresses are sometimes made to the Father only; sometimes to the Son only; sometimes to both, and sometimes to the whole trinity. So that their acts of worship are scenes of confusion and perplexity, and at the close of the service their minds are often troubled lest they should not have paid due respect, in a proportionate degree, to each of the divine persons. The same perplexity in an inferior degree takes place upon the Arian system. If Jesus be indeed the Lord our maker, though he be a delegated lord, and a deputed maker, yet surely reason and equity require that some homage should be paid to him. Nor has this been disputed by Arians themselves till very lately; and I think that few serious persons who hold this doctrine can be satisfied without offering some aspirations of gratitude to a benefactor to whom they are so much indebted, and without breathing out some ejaculations of worship, without tendering some humble suit, to a friend so willing and powerful, and who is always at hand. And yet the declaration of Jesus is decisive, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Now all this painful embarrassment of mind, into which, perhaps, no person can fully enter who has not himself experienced it in some degree, is com-

pletely obviated and removed, by a rational and firm belief in the unity of God, and in the proper humanity of Jesus Christ. We, who are in this strict and proper sense Unitarians, entertain the highest idea of the character of our great Master ; we venerate him as our prophet ; we seek instruction from him as our teacher ; we bow to his authority ; we look to him as our example ; we hope for his salvation ; we triumph in the expectation of being with him where he is. But we worship him not. All our religious homage is addressed to that Great Being to whom Jesus taught us to address it, and to whom he addressed his own, to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.

3. Right views concerning the person of Christ preclude many objections against the christian religion, and tend to facilitate its reception in the world.

Weak and unthinking men may be attached to mystery, and unintelligible notions may for a time gain the advantage over plain truth ; but this triumph cannot be permanent, for " Great is the Truth, and it will prevail."

In an age so enlightened as the present, persons of sense and reflection will not embrace a religion loaded with mysteries and contradictions. Whatever professions, policy or fashion may induce them to make, there will be no sincere assent of the understanding, no cordial subjection of the will, no active and enlightened zeal for the cause. A doctrine, to secure the assent of the judicious and discerning, must be rational and simple. And the opinions of the en-

lightened part of mankind are of the utmost importance; for those opinions, though slow in their progress, will gradually become the creed of the vulgar.

The subtle doctrines which now pass for christianity, though they have no just pretensions to that honourable distinction, were at first forged in the schools of philosophy, and the great body of plain unlettered christians long and vehemently remonstrated against them. But subtlety and power, in these instances, established error in opposition to truth. The times are now more enlightened. Men cannot go backward in knowledge as they formerly did. And when knowledge and numbers are combined in favour of truth, it will obtain an easy and a permanent triumph.

But the doctrine of the trinity, and its various appendages, are insuperable objections to thinking and serious persons against the truth of the christian religion. While these doctrines are regarded as essential to christianity, judicious and reflecting persons will never believe that the christian doctrine can be derived from God. A religion which is intended for rational beings must itself be rational: and no other can proceed from the God of truth.

Even Arianism, though it cannot perhaps be proved to involve a contradiction, will nevertheless give rise to many weighty objections in a considerate mind. It is hard to believe without evidence much more satisfactory than any which has hitherto been, or that can be produced, that God should delegate to

any creature, the power of creating and the office of governing the universe, reserving to himself no character but that of a mere spectator. And that such a mighty agent as the Logos should become the feeble tenant of a human body, is scarcely less incredible than the incarnation, as it is called, of Deity itself.

I will add, that Arianism even in its lowest state, asserting nothing more than simple pre-existence, constitutes in the judgment of many thoughtful persons a very serious objection to the divine origin of the christian religion. The mission of a supposed angelic spirit into the world, and his incarceration in a human body, for no purpose, that appears, but what might have been at least equally well accomplished by the mission of a human being, as it is totally different from the whole analogy of nature, seems also repugnant to the wisdom of God, which, it is reasonable to believe, will never employ pompous and supernatural means to produce an effect which might be brought to pass by a simple and natural process. This scheme therefore can never be admitted by a judicious and well-informed inquirer, but upon evidence the most clear and unequivocal.

But that a human being should be selected from the mass of mankind to recover his offending brethren to the knowledge of God, and truth, and duty, and to confirm and exemplify the doctrine of a future immortal existence by his own resurrection from the grave, is a dispensation altogether worthy of the wisdom and benevolence of the Supreme Being.

It is perfectly rational, simple, and credible, and such as a man of understanding and reflection may admit and avow without a blush.

I do not, however, mean to affirm, even upon the proper Unitarian scheme, that revelation is completely clear of every difficulty. No moral truth is so. But the christian revelation is certainly less encumbered with mystery and doubt upon this plain and simple scheme than upon any other. And upon this ground it may justly challenge the very serious and attentive regard of every one who is in earnest in his inquiries after moral and religious truth.

Having thus established the fact, that it is of high importance to attain just conceptions concerning the person of Christ, I now proceed to remark,—

Secondly, That the settlement of this question is attended with considerable difficulty. Not that I think there would be much difficulty in acquiring a just notion concerning the person of Christ, if the scriptures alone were consulted, and if the mind were free from every undue bias. But, unfortunately, the understandings of the generality of christians are so distorted by early prepossessions as to be, in a manner, blind to the light of truth. Christ is so plainly and uniformly represented throughout his history as a human being, that I cannot but believe that an untaught, unprejudiced, and attentive reader would never have suspected the humble prophet of Nazareth to be any other than a man like other men, invested indeed with great powers for some very important and benevolent purposes. But that in the

present state of things there is real and considerable difficulty in impressing the minds of the bulk of professing christians with just and rational views upon this subject, is evident from the erroneous opinions which so generally prevail; and these difficulties originate principally in the following sources.

1. Prejudice. The great mass of christians are educated from childhood in the belief that Jesus Christ is really and truly God as well as man: and that they who call this mystery in question shall without doubt perish everlastingly. And these erroneous opinions concerning the person and offices of Christ, the nature of his undertaking, the obligations they are under to him, and the religious homage which he claims, are so interwoven into their whole system and habit of thinking, that to give up the deity of Christ is, in their estimation, to give up christianity itself, to strip it of all its glorious peculiarities, to forfeit all its hopes, and to incur its severest condemnation. Prejudices like these must necessarily close the eye against the strongest light.

2. Self-interest. To many persons the belief of the various articles of the popular creed, and particularly of the pre-existence, the deity, the incarnation, and the atonement of Christ, is a source of much emolument. If they give these speculations up, and act consistently with their principles, their gains are gone. And this is a consideration which imperceptibly warps the judgement, and leads it to think favourably of opinions the profession of which is found to be so advantageous. But even where a

profession of popular opinions is not lucrative, a public dereliction of them, and opposition to them, almost universally exposes a person to general odium, to contempt, to suspicion, and to reproach; and few have sufficient strength of mind to dare to be singular in the profession of truth.

3. Indolence. The careful examination of the question, and the correction of inveterate errors, require time and pains. There must be reading, examination, reflection, patient thought, the occupation of many hours which might be more agreeably employed, the practice of much self-denial; and after all it is said there is no adequate benefit, no worldly advantage, no additional respect or influence, no recompense but the consciousness of a faithful performance of duty, and of having exchanged error for truth. And to those who are not lovers of truth, and who do not value it above all price, these motives are too feeble to overcome the natural indolence of the human mind, and the reluctance which men always feel to enter upon and to pursue an investigation which might possibly issue in a revolution of their most sacred principles, and in an entire change in their intellectual habits and feelings.

4. Authority. The whole christian world from the earliest age of the christian religion is said, and is generally believed, to have been united in the doctrine of the pre-existence and even of the divinity of Jesus Christ. The churches of the East and of the West, of Asia, of Africa, and of Europe, the church of Rome and the church of Geneva, the church of

Augsburg, and the church of England, all agree in maintaining the same doctrine: and many, with considerable plausibility, think it highly improbable that all these celebrated churches should be mistaken, and that a few individuals only should be in the right.

The authority likewise of the antient ecclesiastical writers, as well as that of modern divines of great eminence and distinction, is pleaded in defence of the popular doctrine concerning the person of Christ. The names of Justin Martyr, of Tertullian and of Origen, of Athanasius and of Arius, among the antients, and those of Luther and Calvin, of Waterland and Clarke, of Watts and Doddridge, of Chandler and of Price, among the moderns, deservedly carry great weight with them. They were men of high respectability of character, men of talents and men of learning, of diligent inquiry, of inflexible integrity, of ardent piety, who took unwearied pains in studying the scriptures, who directed their inquiries to this subject in particular, and who all concurred in the belief that the pre-existence of Christ, and most of them, that his supreme divinity is plainly taught in the christian scriptures; and that by his own, or by a delegated power, he was the maker, supporter, and governor of the world, and as such entitled to religious homage. Authorities of this kind sometimes possess such a commanding influence, that christians, forgetful of the precept of their great teacher to call no man master upon earth, hardly think themselves at liberty to dissent from them, or to entertain a doubt concerning the truth

of a doctrine which has received the sanction of such venerable names.

5. Argument. While I contend that the general strain of the scriptures is clearly in favour of the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, it is in vain to deny that there are some passages which, detached from their connexion, would appear to a superficial reader, warped by his prepossessions, and ignorant of Jewish phraseology, to wear a different aspect, and to countenance the pre-existence and even the divinity of Christ. And they have been so long applied in that manner, that every other interpretation appears forced and unnatural. These arguments make considerable impression upon the minds of the generality of readers, who are not accustomed to reflect and compare, who judge of the meaning of a text by the mere sound of the words, who are averse to scripture criticism, and who think no interpretations natural which are not to themselves usual.

Having thus stated the principal sources of those difficulties which occur in the solution of the much-agitated question concerning the person of Christ, I proceed to observe,

Thirdly, That these difficulties may by care and diligence be surmounted, and complete satisfaction may be attained.

They have been actually surmounted by many whose earliest and most cherished prepossessions have been in favour of the popular belief. There have even been some who, like the virtuous and learned confessor whose name I have already men-

tioned, having long been the active able champions of the prevailing doctrine, but still keeping their minds open to conviction, have not been able to resist the shining light of evidence, and though late in life have sacrificed inveterate prejudices upon the altar of Truth.

Nor is great sagacity, nor profound learning, nor acute metaphysical subtlety, in any degree necessary for the attainment of satisfactory information upon this subject. The inquiry involves no abstruse speculation, and little or no literary discussion. The question is concerning a plain matter of fact, whether the founder of the christian religion was a human being, or of an order superior to mankind. And this fact is to be ascertained by evidence of which the plain unlettered christian, with a sound understanding, and an honest heart, is as competent to judge as a man of the most splendid talents, and the highest literary reputation. They who tell us that the question concerning the person of Christ is involved in deep learning, and recondite speculation, are either ignorant persons who have not studied the subject, or indolent persons who are desirous of saving themselves trouble, or dishonest persons who are afraid lest the truth, which it is their interest and wish to conceal, should be generally divulged. Why should the scriptures be more difficult to be understood than any other book of equal antiquity? Why should the testimony concerning the person of Christ be less intelligible or satisfactory than the same kind of evidence with respect to

any other matter of fact? And that it is not so, is apparent from the circumstance that many unlearned christians, of plain understandings and inquisitive minds, have, by the study of the scriptures only, and without consulting books of theological controversy, attained to just sentiments concerning the person of Christ.

And how is this satisfaction to be attained? I answer, Not solely, nor chiefly, by reading books of controversy: for theological disputants, like all others, soon grow warm upon the subject, and the christian spirit, if not the proper view of the question, is too often lost in personal altercation. Though, after all, controversy has its use, and the impartial inquirer after truth will easily see, amidst the acrimony of the contending parties, on which side the argument lies. Nevertheless, the best way to learn the doctrine of the scriptures is by studying the scriptures themselves, by reading them deliberately and repeatedly in their proper order and connexion, by comparing one passage with another, the text with the context, passages which are obscure with those which are clear, and thus making the scripture its own interpreter; at the same time occasionally consulting and comparing approved and judicious commentaries and observations. This must be a serious and continual employment. No good is to be expected from reading the scriptures in a formal, cursory, and superficial manner.

Particular attention must be paid to those passages upon which the erroneous doctrines which have been entertained concerning the person of

Christ principally lean for support. That the general strain of at least three of the gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, is in favour of the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, I believe none will dispute. The argument for the pre-existence and divinity of Christ rests upon detached passages from mystical discourses contained in the gospel of John, and upon some figurative expressions in the epistles of Paul. These texts, when carefully examined, will be found to contain nothing inconsistent with that judgement concerning the person of Christ, which we should be led to form from the general tenor of the christian scriptures.

When, by these means, conviction has been obtained, in order to retain it in the mind, and to secure the acquiescence of the affections in the judgement of the understanding, so that faith may become a practical principle, the argument must be kept constantly in sight; and for this purpose it must be frequently reviewed. There are some who, when they hear evidence and are convinced by it, soon forget it all, and their old habits of thinking and states of feeling continually recur. They are, as the apostle James expresses it, like the man who beholds his natural face in a mirror; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away and immediately forgetteth what manner of man he was. This happens principally to persons who acquire new views of divine truth after they are advanced in life, whose habits of thinking and states of feeling are more fixed and less capable of undergoing a material change, than those of persons in earlier life. Arguments, therefore, in

order to be properly felt and to produce their practical effect, must be kept constantly in view. And in due time, not suddenly but gradually, the feelings of the heart will follow the dictates of the understanding.

Be not too much influenced by human authority. If there be great names on one side, there are names equally great on the other. Not to mention those early teachers of the proper humanity of Christ at the æra of the Reformation from popery, whose expositions of the scripture were the admiration of the age in which they lived; in later times the authority of Sir Isaac Newton, and of his intimate friend and fellow-labourer Hopton Haynes, also of Dr. Lardner and Dr. Jebb, will surely weigh in the balance against a multitude of others. These were the decided advocates of the proper Unitarian doctrine. Many eminent characters lately deceased, and others who are still living, might with great propriety be mentioned in this connexion. But these will naturally occur to your own recollection. They need not my testimony, and are above my praise. But in cases of importance, where we possess the means of information, it is our duty to inquire and to judge for ourselves, and not to rely upon the judgement of others. The authority of great names may justly teach modesty, forbearance, and mutual candour; but they are not to overrule the judgement in opposition to evidence.

I may, perhaps, be thought by some to have insisted more upon this subject than it is entitled to by its intrinsic value. In reply, I must appeal to

what I have already urged concerning the importance of correct notions of the person of Christ in the process of this discourse. I may also add, that I have myself had some experience of the different effects of the popular and of the rational system of christianity. The former I have invariably found to be a source of perplexity, of anxiety, of despondency, and gloom: the latter is a never-failing spring of peace and satisfaction, of consolation and of triumph. And I cannot but wish that those upright and pious minds, which are still bowed under the yoke of prejudice and error, might be brought into the light of reason and truth, and might enjoy the comfort of that liberty with which Christ has made us free.

From what has been said I trust that you will see it to be a duty of universal and indispensable obligation, to use the best means and opportunities for gaining information upon this interesting subject, and of communicating that information to others. I trust that you are convinced that they are not losing their time, nor misemploying their faculties, who are either inquiring themselves, or are instructing others, in the true doctrine of the scriptures concerning the person of Christ.

It was a deep impression of the great importance of bearing a grave and public testimony to the fundamental doctrine of the absolute and unrivalled supremacy of the ONE GOD even the FATHER, and to the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, and of entering a solemn and unequivocal protest against the popular corruptions of the christian religion, which

induced a small number of friends to truth and rational christianity, fifteen years ago, to associate together for the purpose of holding up to public view what they deemed to be the leading principles of christian doctrine, purified from popular error; and to promote christian knowledge by the distribution of books. The principal objects of this society are distinctly set forth in the preamble to its Rules. It is there explicitly declared, "That the fundamental principles of the society are, that there is but ONE GOD, the sole former, supporter, and governor of the universe, the ONLY proper object of religious worship; and that there is one mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the doctrine of a future life."

This society, which has no covert and sinister views, which has nothing that it wishes to conceal, which thus openly professes its object and design, which possesses and desires no means of accomplishing its purposes but those of calm dispassionate reasoning, and of appeal to the authority of the scriptures critically and judiciously interpreted, which scorns to avail itself of popular prejudice, and which asks no support but from the lovers of christian truth; this society, which justly claims the honourable distinction of Unitarian, has been from its first institution in the year 1791, incessant in its endeavours to promote its main design; it has spent upwards of two thousand five hundred pounds in printing and distributing tracts for the diffusion of christian knowledge, and the promoting virtuous prac-

tice; and it may surely hope that these exertions have not been altogether in vain. The generous example has stimulated others in different parts of the kingdom to institute similar societies for the same important purposes, with very considerable, and I trust, growing success. Many of the early friends and original supporters of this society are now no more, and others, either now are, or soon will be, laid aside from further service. But we trust that the cause will not suffer in the hands of the rising generation of Unitarians. And it is with great satisfaction that we witness the warm and honourable zeal with which many young persons are animated in its support. Go on, my young friends, in your generous career; and if you cannot surpass some of your predecessors in love to truth, and in zeal for its promulgation, God grant that you may abundantly exceed us in talent, in exertion, in acceptance, and success! Our cause is glorious. Its ultimate success is sure. The means by which its final triumph will be accomplished are unknown. It is an unspeakable honour to be embarked in a service in which we co-operate with God and Christ, and with the wisest and best men in all ages. No one can tell how far his individual exertions may be made instrumental to the diffusion of truth and virtue, and to the improvement and happiness of mankind. But of this we are assured, and let the glorious assurance animate our active and persevering exertions, that no effort, no pious generous effort in the cause of truth and virtue and real christianity shall ultimately be lost.

THE END.

UNITARIAN SOCIETY,

FOR PROMOTING

CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

AND THE

PRACTICE OF VIRTUE,

By distributing such Books as appear to the Members of the Society to contain the most rational Views of the Gospel, and to be most free from the Errors by which it has long been sullied and obscured.

INSTITUTED MDCCXCI.

CHRISTIANITY, proceeding from God, must be of infinite importance; and a more essential service cannot be rendered to mankind, than to advance the interests of truth and virtue; to promote peace, liberty, and good order in society; to accelerate the improvement of the species; and to exalt the character, and secure the greatest ultimate happiness of individuals, by disseminating the right principles of religion, and by exciting the attention of men to the genuine doctrines of revelation.

THIS is the chief object of THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, BY DISTRIBUTING *such* BOOKS as appear to the members of the society to contain the most rational views of the gospel, and to be most free from the errors by which it has long been sullied and obscured. Error, voluntary or involuntary, so far as it extends, must have a pernicious influence. The

members of this society think, therefore, that they are doing signal service to the cause of truth and good morals, by endeavouring to clear the christian system from all foreign incumbrances, and by representing the doctrines of revelation in their primitive simplicity. Truth must ultimately be serviceable to virtue.

THE fundamental principles of this society are, That there is but ONE GOD, the SOLE Former, Supporter, and Governor of the universe, the ONLY proper object of religious worship; and that there is one mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the doctrine of a future life.

THE beneficial influence of these truths upon the moral conduct of men will be in proportion to the confidence with which they are received into the mind, and the attention with which they are regarded. Consequently, all foreign opinions, which men have attached to this primitive system of christian doctrine, and which tend to divert their thoughts from these fundamental principles, are in a degree injurious to the cause of religion and virtue. While therefore many well-meaning persons are propagating, with zeal, opinions which the members of this society judge to be unscriptural and idolatrous, they think it their duty to oppose the further progress of such pernicious errors, and publicly to avow their firm attachment to the doctrine of the UNITY of GOD, of his UNRIVALLED and UNDIVIDED authority and dominion; and their belief that Jesus Christ, the most distinguished of the prophets, is the CREATURE and MESSENGER of God, and not his EQUAL, nor his VICEGERENT, nor CO-PARTNER with him in divine honours, as some have strangely supposed. And they are desirous to try the experiment, whether the cause of true religion and virtue may not be most effectually promoted upon proper unitarian principles, and whether the plain unadulterated truths of christianity, when fairly taught and inculcated, be not of themselves sufficient to form the minds of those, who sincerely embrace them, to that true dignity and excellence of character to which the gospel was intended to elevate them.

RATIONAL christians have hitherto been too cautious of publicly acknowledging their principles; and this disgraceful timidity has been prejudicial to the progress of truth and virtue. It is now high time that the friends of genuine christianity should stand forth and avow themselves. The number of such, it is hoped, will be found to be much greater than many apprehend. And their example, if accompanied with, and recommended by, a correspondent purity of life and morals, will naturally attract the attention of others, and produce that freedom of inquiry, that liberal discussion, and that fearless profession of principles embraced after due examination, which can be formidable to nothing but to error and vice, and which must eventually be subservient to the cause of truth and virtue, and to the best interests of mankind.

N. B. The members who shall receive notices from the secretary of a distribution of books at the beginning of every year, are requested to send the catalogues (post paid) to the Rev. J. Joyce, Glocester Place, Camden Town, specifying the particular books they wish to procure, and to the full amount of their respective nominations. And every subscriber, who shall at any time be desirous of purchasing any books beyond the amount of his allotment, is requested to apply for them to Mr. Joyce, who has undertaken to deliver them, and receive the money.

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By all, who mark'd his mind, rever'd:
By all, who knew his heart, belov'd.

Inscription for Mr. Fox's Bust at Woburn Abbey.

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1806.

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The reasons which induced the Author to take public notice of the much lamented event which gave occasion to this discourse, are assigned in the discourse itself. It is printed to gratify the wishes expressed by some who heard it; and to give an opportunity to others, who were necessarily absent at this season of the year, to read, what if circumstances had permitted, they would have wished to hear.

A few copies are left with the bookseller for sale.

Hackney,
October 22, 1806.

2 SAMUEL XVI. 23.

AND THE COUNSEL—WHICH HE COUNSELLED IN THOSE DAYS WAS AS IF A MAN HAD ENQUIRED AT THE ORACLE OF GOD.

THE character which is here given of the chief counsellor of a great prince in ancient times, can hardly fail to strike the mind as being eminently appropriate to the illustrious statesman lately deceased*, whose funeral ob-

* The right honourable Charles James Fox was born January 13, 1749, and died September 13, 1806. He was buried in Westminster Abbey October 10. The funeral procession was one of the most grand and impressive which was ever exhibited in this country. It was attended by all the cabinet ministers; by a great number of members of both houses of parliament; by the electors of Westminster, and the Whig club;

sequies have just been attended with those vivid tokens of deep and unaffected sorrow in all ranks of society, which are more truly honourable than the pomp and pageantry of the most magnificent procession; whose talents and whose virtues are embalmed in the hearts of his countrymen; and whose removal at this momentous crisis has not only inflicted a deep and painful wound in the bosom of his country, the love of which was the ruling affection of his heart, and to the prosperity of which his talents and his exertions were immediately directed, but has spread consternation and dismay over the continent of Europe, which looked up to his wise and paternal

and by many respectable individuals, some of whom came from very distant parts of the country to pay the last tribute of respect to this venerated patriot. The streets, from Mr. Fox's late residence in the Stable Yard to the Abbey, were lined with an immense concourse of spectators, who all behaved with the utmost propriety and decorum; and whose solemn deportment and dejected countenances expressed, in the most unequivocal language, the emotions of their hearts.

counsels as to an oracle of God, as to the dictates of a guardian angel, who was commissioned to put an end to the miseries which t has so long endured, and to restore order and tranquillity to a suffering world. And, had it pleased the Arbiter of events to have prolonged his life, what might not have been expected from his brilliant talents, his healing counsels, and his philanthropic exertions! But it was not the will of Heaven that mankind should enjoy those blessings which the counsels of this great man would probably have secured. And to the decrees of Providence in its most mysterious dispensations, it is the duty of man to bow with humble resignation. For the thoughts of God are far above our thoughts, and his ways are beyond our comprehension.

My stated hearers will acquit me of the imputation of frequently introducing political subjects into public discourses. Such topics do not often find a suitable place among the lessons of moral and religious wisdom: least

of all does it become those, who, from a principle of conscience, dissent from the great majority of their countrymen upon truths of primary importance, and who regard it as an imperious duty to profess, and teach, a theory of religion, unauthorised, not to say proscribed, by the laws of the state, to distinguish themselves as the zealots of a political party. Suffice it for them, to demean themselves as dutiful subjects of the government under which they enjoy protection, where conscience does not interpose a superior claim; and to be known as the upright and steady friends of the constitution, and liberties of their country, and of the freedom and happiness of mankind. But upon the present mournful occasion, I flatter myself that I may be excused for departing from a general rule, in order to offer a sincere though humble tribute to the super-eminent merits of the great statesman lately deceased; who distinguished himself at all times as the patron and advocate not only of civil, but of *religious* liberty. Of this, the history of his parliamentary life fur-

nishes many signal proofs. First, in the support which he gave to the application of the clergy for relief in the matter of subscription: and afterwards, in his cordial concurrence in the extension of the toleration to protestant dissenting ministers, and tutors. His zeal for religious liberty was further manifested, by the very active and leading part, which, at the unanimous request of the persons principally concerned, he readily undertook, in the application to parliament for the repeal of the test and corporation acts, and by the repeated and splendid exertion of his powers, and the ever-memorable effusion of his manly and brilliant eloquence upon that interesting occasion. Also, by his willingness in coming forward to present, and to support the petition of a small, but respectable body of aggrieved persons, for the repeal of those still more galling and oppressive statutes, by which pains and penalties of uncommon severity are enacted against those who publicly profess and teach, the undivided unity, and unrivalled supremacy of the Deity, and who impugn the popular

but unscriptural notion of three persons and one God. And, finally, by the earnest solicitude which he discovered for the emancipation of our catholic fellow-subjects, from those legal disabilities and disqualifications to which they are still liable, notwithstanding the relief which they have actually obtained from the oppression of many unjust and persecuting statutes, which reflects great honour upon the present reign, and the enlightened spirit of the times. To this may be added, as a further proof of his ardent attachment to the cause of religious liberty, the generous indignation which he ever expressed against that savage and inhuman spirit of bigotry, which, though generally restrained by the wisdom and the authority of government, has nevertheless burst forth upon different occasions, and more than once in the present tolerating reign, has attempted to crush an obnoxious sect by the fury of a lawless mob.

In all these cases did this great statesman exert his extraordinary powers, and display his

astonishing eloquence, with a fervour and earnestness which plainly proved that he was not merely acting a part, or aiming to gain adherents to his political standard. It is even certain that in some of these instances, so far from strengthening, he was actually, and in a considerable degree, sacrificing his political interests. Of this he was fully apprised. But no inferior consideration of private friendship, of party connexion, or of political ambition, could damp the generous enthusiasm of his enlightened and liberal mind, or restrain his noble and patriotic efforts in the cause of universal liberty. Surely then it cannot be regarded as improper or unbecoming, that they for whose benefit he made these generous and persevering exertions, who have in fact derived considerable advantage from them, and who would have been put into complete possession of their civil rights, if his wise and liberal policy had been adopted, should in common with their fellow-citizens and fellow-subjects express their deep regret upon the mournful

occasion, and bear their public grateful testimony to the exalted merits of the virtuous patriot, the intrepid advocate of civil and religious liberty.

If any further apology is necessary for calling your attention to this affecting subject, I would add, that from the first origin of this religious society, many of its most respectable members*, whether in or out of parliament, have been the steady supporters, and not a few of them the personal friends, of this illustrious

* The late Sir George Saville, member for the county of York, Dr. John Jebb, and the learned Solicitor-General John Lee, Esq., men whose names would do credit to any cause, and who were all of them the public and personal friends of Mr. Fox, were regular attendants upon the Unitarian worship in Essex Street from the time when the chapel was first opened in the year 1774, by the author's venerable predecessor, the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, till the time of their decease. The feelings of gratitude would prompt to the mention of some living characters, in no respect inferior to these, either in rank or merit—but propriety and delicacy impose a respectful silence.

statesman. It might, therefore, reasonably be expected, that in this place, an event so deeply and personally interesting as the decease of this extraordinary man, should not be passed over without notice, in some degree proportioned to its magnitude and importance.

To delineate a finished portrait of the mind of this patriotic minister of state, would require talents commensurate with his own, and an intimacy of access to his person of which few comparatively can boast. But as upon the present occasion it is impossible to avoid saying a few words upon the subject, I shall limit myself to a faint outline of his public character, the correctness of which may be easily appreciated by all who have paid attention to the state of the country for the last thirty years, and to the incidents of the public life of the late right honourable Charles James Fox.

To an extraordinary natural capacity improved and embellished by a liberal education,

and to a quickness of apprehension which instantly seized every object that was presented to it, and which with incredible facility developed the most intricate problems, this great man added a memory richly stored with the treasures of science and literature, and well fraught with historical and political knowledge. He was profoundly versed in the history, and the constitution of his country. He perfectly understood its external relations, its connexion with foreign powers, its political and commercial interests, its financial resources, its military and naval strength. He was well acquainted with the history, the strength, the policy, the separate and relative interests and views, of those states which once constituted what has not been improperly called the great republic of Europe, and upon the just equipoise of the political power and influence of which, the liberty, safety, and prosperity of the whole was supposed to depend; and, in a word, he was ignorant of nothing which was necessary to constitute the

consummate statesman. To this was added an extent of views, a comprehension of mind, and an energy of character peculiarly his own. All these were combined with a philanthropy which originated in a natural goodness of heart, improved and extended by historical knowledge, and personal observation, of the inestimable blessings which result from civil liberty, and from a wise administration of government, and of the miseries which accrue to mankind from unjust wars, from tyranny and persecution, and confirmed by generous exertions in defence of the injured, insulted and oppressed; so that what was originally nothing more than a natural bias of the mind, became by degrees a moral principle, and grew up into a fixed habit of universal, active, and disinterested benevolence.

His eloquence, that divine eloquence, which astonished and captivated the world, consisted, not in pomp of diction nor in melody of sound; not merely in a happy selection of expressions, though the best and the most appro-

priate which the language could supply, spontaneously offered themselves to his use; not in dazzling the fancy with brilliant imagery; not in bewildering the understanding with plausible sophistry; not in flattering the prejudices of his hearers, nor in exciting false hopes or groundless terrors to render them blindly subservient to party-purposes—to such unworthy artifices his manly spirit disdained to stoop. His eloquence was of a nobler kind. Plain, nervous, energetic, vehement; it simplified what was complicate, it unravelled what was entangled, it cast light upon what was obscure, and through the understanding it forced its way to the heart. It came home to the sense and feelings of the hearer, and by a secret irresistible charm, it extorted the assent of those who were most unwilling to be convinced. And to crown all, this astonishing eloquence was uniformly exerted in the cause of liberty and justice, in defence of the oppressed and persecuted, and in vindicating the rights, the freedom, and the happiness of mankind.

Political discrimination was another characteristic of this illustrious man. In questions of the utmost difficulty and delicacy, and of the greatest importance, such as have occurred in the present age beyond any former period, his penetrating mind hardly ever failed to distinguish with the greatest accuracy the right, the honourable, and the useful; and to steer an even course between opposite and perilous extremes. He was the friend of reform, but of temperate and peaceable reform. He was the advocate for peace; and had his counsels been pursued, they would probably have ensured universal peace: but it was his avowed principle that even peace might be bought too dear; when it was purchased at the expense of the honour, the liberty, or the safety of the country. Tyranny in every shape was the object of his implacable aversion; but he was equally an enemy to licentiousness and anarchy, and was a zealous supporter of the authority of the law as the only security of rational liberty; and in all the turbulence of the times, he seldom, if ever, failed to observe

that temperate and guarded medium in which true political wisdom consists.

And to these splendid talents, this extraordinary man added an unaffected simplicity of manners, the characteristic of true greatness of soul, and an amiableness of disposition, which won the hearts of all who were honoured with his personal acquaintance.

Such are the faint and imperfect outlines of the public character of this incomparable man. His political career is still fresh in the memory of us all. Early in life he burst forth in all his glory, like the sun in his strength, in opposition to those measures by which America was separated from this country. And when his powerful efforts combined with all the talent and eloquence of the senate, seconded by the voice of the people, and enforced by the critical and alarming situation of the country, had driven the unwise and unfortunate authors and advisers of them from the councils of the sovereign, he occupied a very important office in

the new administration which was formed under the auspices of a distinguished nobleman *, whose eminent abilities and conciliatory spirit united many discordant interests; but who, unfortunately for the country, died within a few months after he entered into office. Political cabals soon compelled Mr. Fox and his friends to quit the cabinet; and resentment for what he regarded as ungenerous treatment impelled him to a measure, which, though it restored him to power with a high hand, was condemned, perhaps, for want of attending to the circumstances of the case, too severely

* The marquis of Rockingham, who succeeded lord North as first lord of the Treasury, in March, 1782, and died the first of July following. He was immediately succeeded by the late marquis of Lansdowne then earl of Shelburne. Mr. Fox, and the Rockingham party, withdrew from the cabinet in disgust; and having formed the famous coalition with lord North and his friends, the noble earl found himself under the necessity of resigning the Treasury, and the coalition ministry succeeded in March 1783. These were dismissed December 18th, the same year, in consequence of Mr. Fox's well-known India bill; and Mr. Pitt's ministry commenced.

condemned, by the general voice of the country. Nevertheless, in the plenitude of his power, however acquired, it cannot be proved that he ever departed from those wise and liberal principles which he always professed; and happy had it been for the country had he continued to direct its counsels. But power did not long remain in his hands; and the manner in which he was dismissed from office will not soon be forgotten. Still, however, his adherents and supporters were numerous and powerful; and his active and brilliant exertions in the cause of peace and liberty were gradually raising him again in the estimation of the public, when the grand and unparalleled revolution which took place in a neighbouring country, like a terrific meteor, shot forth discord and confusion over the surrounding nations. In this unprecedented crisis, a system was pursued by this country directly the reverse of those mild, temperate, and conciliatory measures, which were recommended by this enlightened and liberal statesman; who, in a celebrated publication written

at the time in his own vindication, predicted, with a precision little short of inspiration, the miserable consequences which ensued. But so little regard was paid to his warning voice, that the country, seduced by the fascination of a delusive eloquence, as though it were under a demoniacal infatuation, hurried into the opposite extreme. And this great man, this oracle of political wisdom, was left almost alone; neglected by the court; insulted by his enemies; deserted, with a few illustrious exceptions, by his friends; by those who used to look up to him for advice, and in whom he had been accustomed to place the greatest confidence: he was forsaken by the people, of whose rights and liberties he had ever been the fearless advocate; and was almost proscribed as an enemy to his country. This severe discipline, so unexpected and so unmerited, gave the last polish to his sublime character. It purified his public principles. He now learned to practise patriotism for its own sake. His great mind rose superior to popular

applause: and he persevered in the path of public duty, from a proud sense of honour and conscious rectitude; from a regard to dignity and consistency of character; and from a high and generous principle of love to his country. Thus he persisted in exerting his amazing energies to enlighten, and to save from impending ruin, a people that turned a deaf ear to his earnest and benevolent remonstrances; till, in the end, truth and reason, aided by his potent eloquence, and by the testimony of sad and dear-bought experience, gained a complete victory over prejudice and passion: and this great statesman enjoyed the peculiar felicity of living to see the loftiest of his opponents giving way to the cogency of his arguments; and his illustrious rival himself acknowledging the wisdom of his political principles, earnestly soliciting his co-operation in the direction of the national counsels; and, almost with his latest breath, recommending him as the only person whose talents and energies were capable of extricat-

ing his country from an unparalleled crisis of difficulty and danger. Thus was this extraordinary man, by the unanimous voice of his sovereign and his country, summoned to take the helm of the state in the midst of a tempest, and in circumstances of the most imminent peril; and had it been the will of Providence to have permitted him to carry into execution his magnificent designs, there can be little doubt that he would have steered his important charge into a safe and peaceful harbour. But the felicity of being governed by his wise and energetic counsels was not reserved for Britain. The powers of animal nature sunk exhausted by the vigorous exertions of the mind; and the immense pressure of public business, and public care, broke down a constitution which already indicated symptoms of decay, and in a few months deprived his country of one of the most enlightened, liberal, and patriotic statesmen, which this, or any other age, or nation, could boast, before the mighty schemes revolving in his breast could

be matured and developed, and almost before any one of his wise and salutary measures could be carried into effect.

I shall now suggest a few reflections, which naturally occur from the consideration of this affecting event:

I. We may remark the excellence of the British constitution, by which such exalted characters are formed, and brought to maturity.

Whatever there be of natural talent, or genius, or innate capacity for excellence, dignity, and sublimity, if it is not trained by discipline, and called forth by opportunity, it will lie for ever dormant in the breast, and the world will have no knowledge of it, and will derive no benefit from it. Circumstances form the character. The acorn, which planted in a congenial soil, will take deep root, and grow up a lofty and a spreading oak, bidding defiance to the tempest, and standing for cen-

turies the glory of the forest; if cast upon a rock, or buried in the sand, will decay, and perish, without exhibiting any appearances of vegetative power. Talents, it is probable, are almost equally diffused in every age, and through every rank of life: but the means of cultivation vary, and opportunities are often wanting to call them forth.

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
> The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness in the desert air.

It was the happiness of this age and country, that the great man whose removal we now lament, was born in a class of society, and under a political constitution, which afforded genius the fairest scope. Had his lot been cast under a despotic government, perhaps the love of liberty had never animated his breast, and his splendid talents might have been employed in riveting the galling chain of tyranny and oppression. Or, if no external circumstance could have suppressed this generous and sacred

passion in his noble spirit, his powers might have been directed, and degraded, to the forming and conducting of conspiracies and cabals. Or if the ardour of his mind, and his love of glory, had prompted him openly to oppose despotic rule, he would probably have ended his life in a dungeon, or on a scaffold. In this free and fortunate country, his mighty powers were soon disciplined, and called forth into vigorous action. And in that branch of the legislature in which he early occupied a seat, he learned to combine the love of liberty with the love of order, and with a dignified submission to lawful authority. And while he poured forth the torrent of eloquent invective against those measures, which, in his apprehension, were subversive of the interest and the liberties of his country, he still knew how to restrain the vehemence of his oratory within the limits of personal decorum, of reverence for the constitution, and respect for the monarch. Thus he acquired that generous ardor, that undaunted spirit, that invincible love of rational and constitutional liberty, which raised

him to the resplendent eminence in which he was fixed, and rendered him the admiration of the world. It will hardly be denied, that a character so truly dignified as that of this illustrious statesman, in which the enthusiastic love of liberty was so admirably combined, and qualified, with a profound reverence for the laws and the institutions of his country, could have been generated under any of the present forms of civil society but that which exists in Britain, in which the rights and liberties of the people are effectually guarded, and the powers and prerogatives of the governors are rigidly circumscribed by law.

Happy Britain! if she knows her own felicity: if she duly appreciates, and vigilantly guards, that holy fabric of her civil constitution, which having been erected by the wisdom and experience of former generations, has been cemented with the blood of her most virtuous patriots! Thrice happy! if, while she manifests a liberal inclination to adopt every judicious, and well digested plan of reformation,

and improvement, warned by recent and terrible example, she resolutely guards against the machinations of those (if it be possible there should be any such) who, while they profess to reform, are secretly meditating to destroy.

II. Let us not despair of the country.

A nation can hardly be conceived to have sustained a greater loss than this nation has actually experienced in the last twelve months, in its naval, its military, and its political departments: and the last may justly be regarded as the greatest of all. This nation, the continent of Europe, and the human race, are at this hour mourning orphans, bereaved of the paternal counsels of this illustrious statesman, whose measures were always directed to the liberty, and the happiness of mankind. But, though there is just cause for deep and permanent regret, there is no reason for despair. The British constitution lives. And so firmly are its parts cemented together, and so har-

moniously are its movements adjusted, that it does not depend for its existence and continued operation, upon the character and exertions of any single individual, however distinguished. When Chatham fell, pleading the cause of his country, who did not tremble for the palladium which he protected? But that loss, though great, was speedily and ably supplied. And the same causes will continue to produce the same effects. Prodigies of political talent, and political virtue, such as that, the loss of which we now deplore, do not indeed often appear. Nor is it to be expected, that the men of the passing generation will ever again behold a character equal to that which we have lost; but the rising generation may. The powers of nature are in full vigour: and as times of difficulty call forth corresponding energies, the great events which are now passing in the world, or which are likely soon to take place, will rouse, and bring into action, all the intellectual and active powers of those who may be concerned in them, and will probably give birth to talents equally brilliant,

and to characters equally exalted with any which have been known to preceding ages. In the mean time, we have reason to hope, that the spirit of the departed patriot rests upon his surviving colleagues. And the nation consoles and congratulates itself, that those honourable men * are still permitted to guide its counsels, who had the greatest share in his affection, and who were most in his confidence; who loved his person; who reverenced his virtues; who admired his talents; who adhered to him in all the vicissitudes of his fortune; who have formed themselves

* The appointment of Lord Howick, who has constantly distinguished himself as the intrepid advocate of constitutional liberty, whose eminent talents and nervous eloquence yield only to those of his illustrious friend, and whose character the breath of calumny has never presumed to impeach, to the office held by Mr. Fox; and the introduction of an accomplished nobleman, of the highest promise, to whom the public eye is directed with fond expectation as the genuine representative of his late noble relation, into the Cabinet; are pledges to a grateful nation that the spirit of their late venerated patriot, continues to animate the country.

upon his model; and who have entered into all his comprehensive and philanthropic views. While such men, to whose talents and virtues the bereaved and mourning country looks up with veneration and confidence, continue to advise the measures of government, though tears may not cease to flow, despondency will be banished: and the admirers of the late illustrious statesman, will manifest their regard to his memory, by giving a liberal and firm support to his surviving friends, while they act upon those enlarged principles, and, as far as the state of the times will admit, prosecute those salutary measures, which endeared him to all the wise and virtuous of the nation.

III. Let us acknowledge and adore the providence of God.

It is the Lord who giveth and the Lord who taketh away: and he acts according to his sovereign pleasure, without rendering an account to any, of his purposes, or his decrees.

He is the Lord, and the giver of life: he forms the curious structure of the body: he breathes into man the breath of life: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. He scatters the tender seeds of intellect, and talent, and genius; and casts them into situations favourable to their growth and culture: he shelters them by his protecting care, and gradually brings them on to maturity. In the course of his providence he presents occasions to exercise and to call them forth. All are his workmanship. The venerable patriot, the accomplished orator, the profound statesman, the victorious warrior, the revered philanthropist, possess no powers which he did not communicate, and which he does not extend, or limit, or withdraw at pleasure; for who can call him to account, or say unto God, What dost thou?

It is a mournful consideration, that the great statesman whose removal we so deeply regret, was cut off when life was but beginning to decline, when he was in the zenith of his glory;

soon after he had attained that exalted station which the true friends of the country had long wished for in vain, and of his advancement to which, they began almost to despair. He was removed at a very critical season ; in the midst of a very difficult and important negotiation, when all the hopes of his country were centred in him, and when the whole nation looked up to his wise and vigorous councils, for a successful war, or, for a safe and honourable peace. But in the midst of his vast projects for the prosperity of his country, and for the good of mankind—behold ! he is summoned away by a warrant from irresistible authority, and all his short-lived dignities, his benevolent purposes, and the nation's hopes, are laid prostrate in the dust.

Such was the pleasure of Him who has an unquestionable right to dispose of his creatures as he pleases ; and who orders all things wisely and well. Our limited understandings are ready to apprehend that this mournful event, at any time highly distressing, was in the pre-

sent crisis most unseasonable. But infinite wisdom determined otherwise, and fixed upon the present season, as the fittest, and the best. And though we may not be able to discern the reasons of the divine conduct, we cannot but believe that they are perfectly satisfactory, and the result of the most comprehensive views, and the most benevolent designs. This awful stroke might be intended to baffle human wisdom, and to humble human pride. The hopes of mankind were too highly elevated, and too much confidence was placed in human sagacity and power. Nothing was thought too great, or too good, to expect from those counsels, which were "as if a man inquired at the oracle of God," and from that eloquence, which bore down all opposition. But the Almighty frowns,—and all these towering expectations vanish at once; and the vanity of human confidence is written in the dust of him upon whom that confidence was placed. Thus we are taught the affecting and important lesson, "*what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue.*"

Hence likewise we learn, that there is one Being alone, who is the proper object of national, as well as of individual confidence. He is able both to preserve, and to destroy: and it is the same to him to save, by many, as by few, by the ignorant as by the wise, by the feeble as by the strong. No harm can happen to those who in the practice of duty seek for refuge in God. In his hands they are safe and happy. And though the tenor of divine dispensations may not always accord with their limited views, let them rest assured that all will be eventually well. In the mean time let us triumph in the divine government, " and where we can't unravel, learn to trust."

THE END.

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The Providence of God over-ruling the Issues of War and Conquest.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

CHAPEL IN ESSEX STREET,

February 25, 1807.

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY PROCLAMATION

FOR

A GENERAL FAST.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A PRAYER,

BY THOMAS BELSHAM.

ALL DISCORD, HARMONY NOT UNDERSTOOD,
ALL PARTIAL EVIL, UNIVERSAL GOOD.

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A SERMON.

ISAIAH X. 6, 7.

I WILL SEND HIM AGAINST A HYPOCRITICAL NATION, AND AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF MY WRATH WILL I GIVE HIM A CHARGE, TO TAKE THE SPOIL, AND TO TAKE THE PREY, AND TO TREAD THEM DOWN LIKE THE MIRE OF THE STREETS. HOWBEIT, HE MEANETH NOT SO, NEITHER DOTH HIS HEART THINK SO: BUT IT IS IN HIS HEART TO DESTROY AND TO CUT OFF NATIONS NOT A FEW.

THERE is no habit of mind, the acquisition of which is of greater importance than that of referring all events to God, and of regarding the universe as under the direction and controul of one

governing will, to which the wills of all inferior agents are subordinate; and by which they are regulated and restrained in such a manner as to bring to pass uniformly, and upon all occasions, and often without any explicit intention of their own, those events, and those only, which infinite wisdom and benevolence have previously determined, and which are necessary to the accomplishment of the plan of divine providence. This principle, well fixed and deeply rooted in the mind, constitutes the only solid foundation of fortitude and firmness of spirit amidst the convulsions of political society, or the vicissitudes of private life.

The active superintendence of divine providence over the affairs of men, is the plain dictate both of reason and revelation: and upon the present occasion we cannot employ our time more usefully, nor better answer the purpose of our present assembling, than by meditating upon this interesting subject: and particularly by contemplating the wisdom of providence in directing

and over-ruling the important issues of war and conquest, which are two of the greatest evils incident to mankind.

That these disastrous events are equally with all others under the direction of divine providence, and that they are limited and over-ruled for purposes the most important and beneficial, is the express doctrine both of natural and revealed religion, and is also satisfactorily established and confirmed by historical evidence.

I. Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world. When he forms his creatures, when he communicates to each their respective powers, when he imparts to them their several capacities for knowledge, for mental improvement, for moral agency, for active exertion, when he places them in their respective circumstances of birth, of education, and of social connexion, when he allots to one an exalted, and to another a mean condition of life, when he gives opulence to one, power to an-

other, talents to a third, while to others he denies all these privileges, and with-holds from them the means of improvement, or, perhaps, places them in circumstances of great moral disadvantage, and surrounds them with examples of notorious profligacy; surely, he must know in every instance what the result of these circumstances and impressions will be, and what the natural and moral consequences, of the advantages, or disadvantages of men's external condition. He knows that in many circumstances, the selfish, the malignant, and the ambitious passions will be naturally generated, and that when armed with power they will produce their correspondent effects: that man will often be the foe of man, and that the rational offspring of the universal parent will frequently meet together, not to embrace with fraternal affection, nor to contribute to each other's happiness, but, with their utmost efforts to injure and to destroy each other.

Moreover, as in him we live, and move,

and have our being, as the supporting energy of God is necessary to the existence of all his creatures, and as his co-operating energy is also essential to give effect to all their volitions, it is impossible without his interposition, permitting, sustaining, and impowering them to act, that they should be able to carry any of their purposes into effect: so true it is that nothing can take place in the world without the notice and concurrence of divine providence. And this principle applies equally to the mightiest conqueror as to the meanest slave. The Cyruses, the Alexanders, and the Cæsars of the earth, how highly soever they may estimate themselves, how proudly soever they may vaunt their prowess, or magnify their power, and how contemptuously soever they may think of the rest of mankind who are their equals in the sight of God, what are they but instruments in the hands of the Almighty, from whom they derive all their powers, who has allotted and circumscribed their spheres of action, who knows all their ambitious designs and all their mischievous

and malignant purposes, who can direct or controul them at pleasure, and against whose will to rise in rebellion would be an absurdity that wants a name? Or, in the prophet's expressive imagery, it would be as though the axe should boast against him that heweth with it, and as if the staff should lift itself up against its master.

And if the providence of God is thus intimately concerned in all events, and particularly in the calamitous scenes of war and conquest, can it be doubted for a moment whether he will not direct and over-rule them for beneficial purposes? Will he suffer these haughty worms, these proud emmets of a day, to gratify their malignant or ambitious views, and to carry into effect their frantic schemes, in contradiction to his own wise and beneficent purpose, without opposition or restraint? Oh no! it is impossible. The purpose of omnipotence shall stand, whatever falls, whatever schemes may be confounded, whatever combinations may be formed against

it. And what is the purpose of omnipotence? O glorious thought! it is, that the creatures of God shall be ultimately happy. The thoughts of God are not like those of frail imperfect man. They are thoughts of peace and not of evil: peace on earth and goodwill to men. This conclusion is demonstrable if God be infinitely good. And the infinite goodness of God is established beyond a doubt, by the excellence of his nature, by his own declarations, by the actual state of things, by the vast preponderance of happiness, and by the natural, irresistible, continually accelerated tendencies of things to a better and a happier state. If then we can be sure of any thing, we may be sure that all the calamities which exist in the world, which, numerous as they are, in comparison with the preponderant good, are but as motes in the atmosphere, or as spots on the surface of the sun, all these evils whether of a public or of a private nature, without excepting even the sweeping calamities of war and conquest, are vigilantly watched, and with the most minute attention

arranged and controuled, so that none shall be permitted to exceed the exact limits prescribed by infinite wisdom and benevolence. As far as they are suffered to extend they shall be made subservient to the beneficent purposes of the divine government, and in the end they shall be completely exterminated, and love and order and happiness shall universally prevail.

II. This is the doctrine of enlightened reason, and the language of divine revelation coincides and harmonises with it.

"The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of man and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Wisdom and might are his. He changeth the times and the seasons. He removeth kings and he setteth up kings, and those who walk in pride he is able to abase."

And as this doctrine is taught generally, so in particular instances, warlike chiefs and mighty conquerors are represented as the instruments

of God in fulfilling his purpose, as acting under his direction, and as limited by his authority.

Thus, in the chapter from which the text is taken, the potent king of Assyria is represented as a rod in the hand of divine providence, to execute the purposes of immutable wisdom and justice: but without intending any such thing, and while he was bent only upon gratifying his ambition. The prophet in the name of the Supreme Being, first summons him to the work, and gives him his commission*. "Ho! to the Assyrian. The rod of my anger, and the staff of my indignation is in his hand. Against a dissembling nation I will send him: and against a people, the object of my resentment, I will give him charge: to gather the spoil, and to bear away the prey: and to trample them under foot as the mire of the street." As though he had said, I authorise and impower this mighty monarch to execute the sentence of my justice

* See Bishop Lowth's and Mr Dodson's Translation.

upon the guilty nations. "But he does not so purpose, and his heart does not so intend." It is the furthest from his thought, to conceive that he is acting under a superior and limited commission. He thinks of nothing but adding to his conquests, and of gratifying his insatiable ambition. "To destroy is in his heart, and to cut off nations, not a few."

But whatever this proud conqueror may think or intend, it is declared that when the divine purpose is accomplished his commission shall close, his ambition and cruelty shall be restrained and punished, and his vain attempts to pursue his conquests in opposition to the will of the Most High, are treated with the most poignant ridicule, and the bitterest sarcasm. "When Jehovah shall have accomplished his whole work upon the mountain of Sion, and upon Jerusalem, he will punish the proud heart of the king of Assyria, and the triumphant look of his haughty eyes. Because he has said, by the strength of my hand I have

done it, and by my wisdom I have removed the boundaries of the people, and I have plundered their treasures, and brought down those who were strongly seated. Shall the axe boast against him who heweth with it? Shall the saw magnify itself against him who moveth it? As if the rod should wield him that lifteth it, and as if the staff should lift up its master."

And when in fact this formidable potentate afterwards came up to Judea, and having laid waste the kingdom of Israel, and carried the inhabitants into captivity, threatened to lay siege to Jerusalem, and to exterminate for ever the Jewish name and nation, when his numerous armies and vaunting threats struck terror into the heart of Hezekiah and his nobles, the prophet Isaiah was commissioned by God to administer comfort to the desponding monarch, and to assure him that the menaces of his proud adversary should not be carried into effect, and that they should reverberate upon himself to his own confusion and ruin. "Because," says the inspired pro-

phet in a bold apostrophe to the haughty prince in the name of God, "because thy rage against me and thy insolence is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose and my bridle in thy jaws, and I will turn thee back by the way thou camest." A prediction which in a short time afterwards was awfully verified. For a pestilential blast, which, as executing the purpose of the Supreme Being, is called the angel of the Lord, destroyed his whole army in one night, and compelled him to flee back with shame to his own country, where he was soon afterwards assassinated in a conspiracy of his two sons.

In similar language in the prophecy of Ezekiel, (Chap. xxix.) God speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as having been commissioned by him to besiege and conquer Tyre, and as paid for his service in this expedition by the facility with which he conquered Egypt. Thus representing this mighty monarch, and aspiring conqueror, as a mercenary serving for wages, and sent about

from place to place to execute the orders of his master. " O son of man, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre, yet neither he nor his army had wages from Tyre for the service which he served against it. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Lo, I will give the land of Egypt to the king of Babylon, and he shall take her multitude, and share her spoil, and seize her plunder, and she shall be wages for his army. For his wages wherewith he served against Tyre I have given him the land of Egypt, saith the Lord Jehovah*."

In the same style of sovereign authority he grants to Cyrus a commission to conquer Babylon, and to restore the Jews to their own country. Isaiah. XLV†.

" Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whom I hold by the right hand, that I

* See Archbishop Newcome's Translation.

† See Lowth and Dodson.

may subdue nations before him. Understand thou, and thou shalt perform all my pleasure: who saith to Jerusalem thou shalt be built, and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid. I will go before thee, and will make the mountains level, the gates of brass I will break asunder, and the bars of iron I will hew down. For the sake of my servant Jacob and of Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name, and I will support thee although thou knowest me not. I have girded thee although thou hast not known me. That they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is nothing without me, I am Jehovah and there is none else, forming light and creating darkness, making peace and creating evil. I Jehovah am the author of all these things."

Language cannot express in terms more intelligible or more forcible, the over-ruling energetic providence of God, in the revolutions of empires and in the results of war and conquest.

Passages similar to these which have been produced from the Jewish scriptures are not to be found in the writings of the evangelists and apostles. And the reason is, that the Mosaic dispensation concerned the Jews as a nation, and consequently, the civil affairs of the Hebrews and of the surrounding peoples, often attracted the attention of the Jewish prophets, and became the theme of their animadversions and predictions. The Christian religion applies chiefly to men as individuals, and expresses in the strongest language the attention of divine providence to the concerns of men in their individual capacities, but takes little notice of the revolutions of political communities. Nevertheless, as these consist of individuals, they must, as such, be under the direction of the providence of God. And the predictions contained in the Christian scriptures concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the rise and progress of the antichristian power, and the ultimate and universal success of the gospel, plainly teach the important doctrine of the

superintendence of divine providence over national concerns and political revolutions. And,

III. The doctrine of reason and revelation is further confirmed by undeniable fact and historical proof.

That war is an evil of the first magnitude, that it often originates in and frequently generates the most malignant passions, and that it is productive of the most lamentable effects, both to individuals and to communities, is a fact too obvious to need proof, and too palpable to admit of controversy. Nevertheless, as war is an evil permitted under the divine government, and the results of which are under the direction and controul of divine providence, and as we are sure that in the plan of infinite benevolence no evil is admitted but with a view to preponderant good, we may be confident that war, which is one of the greatest calamities to which mankind are exposed, is not without its beneficial effects. And as it is permitted to

the anxious and inquisitive mind of man to speculate with reverence upon the divine conduct, and to enquire with humility into the reasons of the divine dispensations, we may be allowed to hope that in this instance as well as in others, we may discover some of those important and beneficial purposes for the sake of which so great an evil is permitted to take place. And we shall find upon calm and dispassionate enquiry, both that the evils of a state of war are often greatly exaggerated, and that the consequences of it are, sometimes, extensively beneficial.

In this favoured island, in which we are protected by the ocean as by a wall of brass, we are happily ignorant of the calamities which war produces in the countries where it actually rages, and which are the wretched scenes of battle and of blood. We know these miseries only from report, and without any false colouring or imaginary exaggeration, we must be convinced that the horrors of war, to those who

are the immediate sufferers by them, surpass all description. Nevertheless, it is but right to reflect that these horrors are both partial and temporary. That a military life with all its perils and its sufferings is not upon the whole unhappy, is evident from the attachment of many to that profession who have had the greatest experience of its hardships and dangers. Of the multitudes who fall in battle, a considerable proportion would have expired by a natural death if they had remained at home. Of the rest, a few years of life which they would otherwise have enjoyed have indeed been curtailed: but, they have probably been saved from much pain, and labour, and misery. The mode of dying has been much less distressing than by natural and lingering disease. In a just war their deaths have been much more honourable to themselves and useful to others, than generally speaking, they could have been in any other form. Their memory is embalmed in the hearts of surviving friends. And the liberality of a grateful country, and of their generous fellow-

citizens, often provides better for their orphan families than it would ever have been in their power to have done by their own exertions.

These considerations alleviate, although they by no means, annihilate the horrors of war. But, these miseries, great as they are, may sometimes be productive of very beneficial consequences. War rouses man to exertion, and exertion is the soul of life. Exertion carried to the highest degree which the powers of human nature will endure without violent and painful tension, constitute the true happiness of active, of intellectual, and of moral existence. But such is the indolence of human nature, that the mere prospect of bettering their condition is not in general sufficient, especially in an uncivilized state, to rouse men from their natural apathy and torpor. The sense of pain, or the apprehension of danger, are almost the only motives which are sufficient to kindle up, and to call into action, the energies of the human mind. But of these stimulants war is one of the most

active and effectual. The sufferings and the dangers of war have alone been efficacious to compel men in a savage state to associate together for mutual protection and defence, and have thus laid the foundation for all the improvements of civil society, and the arts of cultivated life. And those mechanical contrivances which have been invented by the ingenuity of man for the purposes of attack and defence in time of war, have in a thousand instances contributed to the benefit and improvement of society in time of peace. War likewise gives birth and scope to many of the most exalted virtues: to rational courage, to heroism, to contempt of danger and of death in the cause of freedom and our country, and in discharge of duty. And true courage seldom fails to be accompanied with magnanimity and clemency, and while it subdues those who resist, it delights in sparing the vanquished suppliant, and knows how to admire and to reward virtue even in a conquered foe.

Thus we are constrained, and may well re-

joice to admit, that out of this great evil, the wisdom of divine providence often educes good *.

The most dreadful consequence of war is conquest. A conquered country is, generally speaking, an oppressed, and miserable country. Its nobles are degraded. Its laws and customs are trampled under foot. Its opulence is pillaged. Its manufactures and arts are ruined. Its commerce is annihilated. And its inhabitants are reduced to servitude and beggary. Conquest is generally, and not unjustly, regarded as the crown of human evils. Yet conquest like war has its brighter side.

The conquest of a number of small independent communities, and the union and blending of them into one great empire, has often put an end to animosities and feuds, and has introduced the arts and comforts of social and civilized life. Our native country amid the con-

* See Priestley's Lectures on History, Lecture 67.

fusion and broils of the Saxon heptarchy, remained and would ever have remained in a barbarous and miserable state: but when united by conquest under a firm and compact government, it gradually rose to freedom, opulence, and renown. The conquest of a barbarous by a civilized nation, commonly introduces among the barbarous people, the arts and sciences of the victorious country, and thereby greatly improves their original condition. The nations conquered by the Romans, were generally speaking much benefitted by becoming integral parts of the Roman empire. Britain and Spain and Gaul, which previously to the Roman conquest were little better than haunts of untutored savages, under the fostering care of the imperial government, became civilized and opulent. On the contrary, when a civilized government has fallen a prey to a barbarous conqueror, it has seldom failed in its turn to subdue its masters to the love of civilization and science. The Romans were little better than barbarians when they invaded Greece: after which they soon dis-

covered the value of mental improvement, and the conquerors of the world resorted to the schools of Athens to be instructed in eloquence, in philosophy, and the arts *.

Thus it appears that the greatest public calamities, and those from which individuals usually suffer most in the beginning, are often eventually over-ruled to produce the happiest effects both to individuals and to communities, and we still see the governing hand of divine providence conducting the affairs of men to a wise and beneficial issue.

This conclusion will be yet more apparent and undeniable, if we take a brief review of the moral and religious benefits which have accrued to mankind from some of the most memorable conquests recorded in history, both sacred and profane.

The conquest of Canaan by the Israelites,

* See Dr. Priestley's Lectures on History, Lect. 68.

and the utter extermination of the inhabitants for their enormous crimes, has established through all ages a terrible record of the justice of God, and of the divine displeasure against sin. This was the explicit ground of the commission granted to the Hebrew nation to subdue and lay waste the country. And surely the attributes of God, and the justice of his government, are no more liable to be impeached because of the destruction of the Canaanites by the sword of the Hebrews, than if the country had been depopulated by pestilence and famine.

The conquest and entire subjugation of the kingdom of Israel by the monarch of Assyria, and the captivity of the ten tribes, from which they never returned, was a punishment justly inflicted upon that faithless people for their idolatry and other crimes, of which they refused to repent, notwithstanding the frequent, earnest, and pathetic warnings and admonitions of the prophets of God, who were from time to time raised up for this purpose.

The subsequent conquest of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, was likewise a memorable accomplishment of the divine predictions, and a just punishment of idolatry and rebellion. It is a remarkable fact, that the hardships which that extraordinary people suffered during this captivity of seventy years, completely cured them of their strange propensity to idolatrous worship: so that whatever political or individual crimes they might be guilty of after their restoration to their own country, they never as a nation relapsed into idolatry. But, from that memorable period, as long as they retained a political existence, they bore a firm national testimony, often amidst difficulties and severe persecutions, to the great doctrine of the unity of God. And since their wonderful dispersion into all countries, whilst in a state of unparalleled indignity and contempt, and what is still more surprizing, of extreme degeneracy and depravity of moral character, they have, notwithstanding, stedfastly maintained, and to this day

continue to exhibit, an undeviating and undaunted adherence to this fundamental truth.

The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus king of Persia, whom God raised up for that important purpose, was the means of restoring the Jews to their own country, and thus of fulfilling the divine promise, and of preparing the way for the advent of the Messiah.

The dissolution of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great, and the distribution of his immense empire after his decease among the principal officers of his army, not only fulfilled the prophecies of the Jewish scriptures, but contributed greatly to promote the knowledge of true religion, and the worship of the one true and living God. That magnanimous and powerful prince, greatly favoured the Jewish nation, and gave them a large establishment in Egypt. Continuing to enjoy the patronage of his successors, they became very numerous in this country, and were permitted to build them-

selves a temple for the worship of Jehovah, which almost rivalled the temple of Jerusalem. They were also encouraged to translate the Hebrew scriptures into the Greek language, by which they became known to the philosophers of Greece; who probably derived much of the knowledge for which they were so justly renowned, from their intercourse with the Jews, and from their acquaintance with their scriptures.

The immense extent of the Roman empire at the advent of Christ, exceedingly facilitated the first promulgation of the Christian religion, by the uniformity of its political institutions, by the privileges attached to Roman citizens, by the facility of transition from place to place, by the tolerant spirit of the Roman government to the religions of all nations, and by the paramount authority of the Roman magistrates, who often interposed to protect the Christian missionaries, when they were in danger of falling a sacrifice to the savage fury of ignorant or interested and vindictive bigots.

The invasion and overthrow of the Roman empire by the barbarous nations of the North was the means of civilising in a considerable degree those savage tribes, and of introducing them to the knowledge of the Christian religion, which, though it was at that time in a very corrupted state, was nevertheless far more rational and more favourable to virtue and good morals, than the absurd and sanguinary rites of paganism which they had inherited from their heathen ancestors.

The conquest and subjugation of a considerable part of Asia, Africa, and Spain, by the Saracen power under the command of Mahomet and his successors, was the means of preserving some of the most valuable arts and sciences, which were greatly on the decline in Europe in the dark ages. And what is of far greater consequence, these enthusiastic warriors were the instruments of providence in promulgating a religion, which though in many of its doctrines false and absurd in the extreme, nevertheless

assumed as its foundation the proper Unity of God, at a time when that important truth began to be almost universally abandoned by the professors of a corrupt and miserably deteriorated system, which retained little of primitive christianity but the name.

And to add no more, the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and the total subversion of the Greek empire, compelled the men of learning and piety to flee from that splendid capital, which in the darkness of the middle ages had remained almost the only asylum of literature and the arts, and to take refuge in other countries, and particularly in Italy, where they were patronised by the popes, and protected by the civil power. This was the principal cause of the revival of learning in Europe, the dissemination of which being greatly accelerated and irrevocably established by the newly invented, and inestimable art of printing, gave a new and a glorious spring to the human mind, and gradually prepared the way for the reformation from popery; an im-

mortal æra, from which we may justly date the origin of every thing good and great, which has since been discovered or atchieved in philosophy or the arts, in theology or in morals : and of the rapid, the incessant, and the continually accelerated progress of human improvement.

Thus by a brief induction of facts of public notoriety, the important doctrine of reason and revelation is amply confirmed, that the providence of God superintends the political concerns of men, and directs and controuls the various issues of war and conquest, for the accomplishment of its own wise and benevolent purposes. Hence we learn,

1. To adore the unfathomable depths of the divine counsels.

It is the prerogative of God to bring good out of evil, and to make use of the bad passions, and of the wicked conduct of men, to accomplish his own great and benevolent designs.

The hearts of men are in the hands of the Lord, and he turneth them whithersoever he will: and makes them subservient to his own purposes when they least suspect or intend any such thing. That so much evil natural and moral should be admitted under the government of omnipotent wisdom is a problem too difficult for solution by human sagacity. The judgments of God are a great deep: but in the final result, all will appear to have been ordered in the best manner and for the best purposes.

II. The providence of God does not infringe upon the moral agency, and accountableness of man.

The proud king of Assyria receives his commission from God, he is the staff of divine indignation to punish a guilty people, and when the purpose of God is accomplished a bridle is put into his jaws, and he is ordered back to his own country. Yet he is himself not conscious of this, and thinks of nothing but gratifying an

unjustifiable and lawless ambition, for which he is justly and severely punished. The morality of human actions does not depend upon the course of providence, or the mysterious decrees of heaven, but upon the nature and tendency of the action itself, and the good or bad quality of the motive from which it springs. And correspondent to the moral quality of his actions, and to the character of the agent, will be the complexion of his future destiny, to happiness, or misery.

III. Let no one presume to do evil that good may come.

God saith of himself, I form light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. He hardens the heart of Pharaoh, he ordains the death of Christ. But in all this, he acts consistently with perfect rectitude, and unerring wisdom. He employs the bad passions of men to accomplish his purposes, not because he delights in wickedness, but because to his all

comprehending mind, this method of proceeding, taken in all its circumstances and bearings, appears to be fittest and best. His judgment is unerring. His justice is impartial. Nor shall any of his creatures ever have cause to arraign the benevolence of their Maker. But the conduct of divine providence in these extraordinary cases is no warrant to ignorant and fallible men to act in a similar manner, much less to violate the plain rules and principles of duty and good morals under pretence of accomplishing some important and salutary purpose. No maxim is more dangerous than this, that the goodness of the end will justify the irregularity of the means. To practise virtue in the fear and love of God is the plain line of human duty, from which in no case and under no pretence whatever is it permitted to men to deviate.

IV. In the present crisis of difficulty and danger, let us repose our confidence in the providence of God, and in the steady performance of duty let us calmly wait the destined issue.

The state of Europe in general, and of this country in particular, is, at this time, truly alarming. The political horizon is over-cast with the darkest clouds. We are at war with a potent and inveterate enemy, possessed of transcendant military talents, and who is pursuing a career of victory and conquest, unparalleled in modern times. Since the last national solemnity of this kind, one mighty and warlike kingdom has been expunged from the map of Europe, and the only remaining continental power of primary magnitude and importance, is threatened in its metropolis, and convulsed to its center. All hope of peace is vanished. Our GREAT PACIFICATOR is no more. And the only prospect before us is war—war conducted upon principles which would disgrace a barbarous age, and extending to an indefinite period. Humanity sickens at the thought: and lifts an imploring eye to the Regent of the Universe to interpose his powerful arm, to calm the tempestuous billows of discord, and to give peace to a troubled world. Nor shall the prayer of the upright be offered in vain.

Let us not then be disquieted beyond what is reasonable, but in the conscientious discharge of every public and of every private duty let us wait with a calm and a collected mind, to see what God will do. The proudest conqueror cannot advance one step beyond the prescribed limits. When the commission is fulfilled, its powers shall be revoked, the schemes of unbounded unprincipled ambition shall be baffled and disappointed. When the destined hour is come, the mighty warrior shall be arrested by an invisible hand, and shall be restrained, as by a chain of adamant, from pursuing his mad career: and at the proper time he will be visited for the crimes which he may have perpetrated, and for the evil which he hath done. In the mean while, he may justly be regarded as the rod of the divine anger, and the staff of the divine indignation, for punishing a guilty world, and as an instrument in the hand of God for accomplishing the purposes of infinite wisdom and benevolence.

What these purposes are, we may not as yet

be able to discover. But whether it be our lot or no to see the issue of this eventful crisis, of one thing we may rest assured, that the beneficial ends which will be ultimately accomplished by these extraordinary means, will be in every respect worthy of the wisdom of divine providence, and will amply compensate the miseries of the intervening period, and of the means by which they will be brought to pass.

That our own country is in any considerable danger of being visited by this bold and menacing invader, I cannot easily bring myself to apprehend. The unanimity and public spirit with which persons of all ranks and conditions are inspired to repel the insult of a foreign intruder, and the powerful means of prevention and defence of which we are in possession, which have been long prepared, and which are no doubt employed in the best manner by the government of the country, may justly preclude all painful alarm. Nor can I think that the smiles of heaven will yet be withdrawn from the

British standard, or that this highly privileged country will now be deserted by that protecting providence which has so frequently interposed in its defence in former seasons of alarm and danger. Undoubtedly, we are a sinful nation, and if we looked to moral desert alone, independently of divine mercy, our hope would be very faint indeed. Yet still, we have satisfactory evidence, and I triumph in the thought, that neither public nor private virtue are totally extinct amongst us. The unexampled unanimity of the government and the country in the glorious abolition of the detested traffic in human blood, and the cordial concurrence of political parties in the wise and liberal measures which have been brought forward by an enlightened patriot for instructing the ignorance and bettering the condition of the poor, are facts which do credit to the character of the country; They are expressions of national virtue which cannot but be acceptable to a Being of infinite benevolence, who delights in mercy, and which, we may humbly hope, will entail a correspondent blessing.

To conclude. Let every individual at his respective post, do his duty to himself, and to his neighbour, to his country, and to his God. Thus shall we evince the truest patriotism: thus shall we secure the blessing of heaven: and thus we may rest assured that whatever happens, all will eventually terminate well. "For the fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect thereof, quietness and assurance for ever."

A PRAYER.

O GOD, thy judgments are unsearchable, and thy ways are past finding out. Clouds and darkness are round about thee: but justice and judgment are the pillars of thy throne.

We bow in humble adoration to thine awful dispensations; and amidst the calamities and disorders which exist in the world, we place our humble and chearful confidence in Thee, who alone canst cause light to spring out of darkness, and canst bring good out of the greatest evils. All events are subservient to thy wise and merciful designs, and the final result of all shall be worthy of thine infinite and unchangeable goodness.

Regard in mercy a nation, long the favourite of thy providence, exalted to high præ-eminence by liberties and privileges civil and religious, too forgetful of thy goodness in the day of prosperity, now placed in a crisis of unusual danger and alarm, humbling itself at thy footstool, and imploring thy mercy.

Thou hast lifted us up and cast us down: and we presume not to arraign the justice of thy dispensations. Unto thee, O God, we must ascribe righteousness, but unto us belongeth shame and confusion of face. We confess, and we deplore our national offences: our national pride, our forgetfulness of God, our injustice to men, our neglect of duty, our manifold abuses of opulence and power, and the inconsistency of our national character with the mild, forbearing forgiving spirit of the gospel. And we lament the numerous instances in which the follies and vices of individuals have added to the mass of national guilt, and have contributed to provoke thy righteous indignation.

Our sins have deserved thy severest judgments. And, if all the calamities with which we have been threatened, should be permitted to visit us in their extremest rigour, while sinking under the terrors of thine anger, we must still acknowledge and adore thy justice.

O Lord our God, with penitent hearts we implore thy mercy. Avert, we beseech thee, the impending stroke. Spare a little longer a humbled and a guilty nation, that we may yet have space for repentance and reformation. Pour out upon the inhabitants of the land a spirit of penitent prayer: and dispose them to make a wise improvement of continued privileges and mercies.

Vouchsafe thy protection and blessing to thy servant the king. Direct his counsels: prosper his administration, "and suffer nothing to obstruct his designs for the public good. Send him help from thy holy place, and evermore mightily defend him. Let his enemies have no

advantage against him, and let not the wicked approach to hurt him."

Bless the queen consort: the prince and princess of Wales, and all the branches of the royal family. May they be eminently virtuous, wise, and good, and in their exalted stations, blessings to the country.

Infuse wisdom and vigour into the national counsels. May those who are intrusted with the administration of government be men of approved integrity, of strong and comprehensive minds, lovers of peace and lovers of their country, of ardent zeal for the public good, well qualified to discern, and heartily disposed to pursue those measures which shall most effectually prevent every threatened evil, and ensure public prosperity.

Go forth with our armies and our fleets. Inspire every breast with a generous zeal for the defence of the country, of its territory, of its

commerce, of its government, of its laws and rights, of its liberties, and its religion. Crown them with victory in the day of battle. Defeat the designs of an exasperated foe; and speedily restore the invaluable blessing of an honourable and a permanent peace.

Bless the judges and magistrates of the land. May they administer justice with sagacity and integrity. And in the peace and good order of the country, and in the respect and gratitude of the wise and good, may they receive the recompence of their arduous, honourable, and important services.

May the ministers of religion of every denomination be wise and faithful interpreters of the oracles of God. And be themselves living examples of the excellence and beneficial influence of the principles of genuine christianity.

"Put away we beseech thee all rancour of religious dissension: that they who agree in the

essentials of our most holy faith may, notwithstanding their differences upon doubtful points of opinion, and in the forms of external worship, still be united in the bonds of christian charity, and love one another as Christ hath loved them."

May the people be free, united, virtuous, and happy. May they be duly instructed in their rights and in their duties: may they ever be zealous upon the best principles to defend the one, and to fulfil the other. And may the liberties and privileges of the nation, be transmitted with improvement to the latest posterity.

Now to the living and eternal God be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.

THE END.

W. Pople, Printer,
22, Old Boswell Court, Strand.

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY

THE DEATH

OF THE

REV. THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M. A.,

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL IN ESSEX STREET,

STRAND, NOVEMBER 13TH, 1808:

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR:

BY

THOMAS BELSHAM.

MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.

"HEAR ME, AT LEAST, OH! HEAR ME FROM THE GRAVE." *Dr. Trapp.*

LONDON:

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1808.

TO THE

CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIPERS,

AT THE CHAPEL IN ESSEX STREET,

THIS LAST MOURNFUL TRIBUTE

OF AFFECTION AND DUTY

TO THEIR REVERED FOUNDER,

WHOSE DOCTRINE

MAY THEY FROM CONVICTION EMBRACE!

WHOSE VIRTUES

MAY THEY CLOSELY IMITATE!

AND

IN WHOSE FINAL REWARD

MAY IT BE THEIR HAPPINESS TO PARTAKE!

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HIS TOO UNWORTHY SUCCESSOR;

BUT THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND

AND DEVOTED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

A FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR

THE REV. THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M.A.

UPON the present mournful occasion, I know not, my fellow Christians, to what subject I can with more propriety invite your attention, than to one which our late venerable friend has left upon record, as explaining the motive of his conduct, and expressing the great object of his desire and hope in the most interesting and trying scene of his life. It is written,

MATTHEW XXV. 23. *Well done, thou good and faithful servant,——enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

"To leave a station of ease and affluence," saith this most excellent and truly apostolical confessor, in his Farewell Address to his parishi-

oners at Catterick, "and to have to combat with various straits and hardships of an uncertain world, affords but a dark prospect. But we must willingly submit to this hard lot when not to be avoided without deserting our duty to God and his truth. And we have great encouragement given us by our divine master and saviour Christ. Matt. x. 32. 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father, who is in heaven.' And Mark x. 29. 'Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.'" He adds, "It is of small concern in what outward circumstances we pass over the short term of life, if we can but obtain that blessed approbation in the end, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord**."

* Farewell Address, p. 12.

The present life is a school of education, in which the intellectual powers and moral principles are gradually unfolded, and in which, by various processes of mental discipline, human beings are trained to immortality. The tendency of the dispensations of divine providence with respect to individuals is to extend the views, and to enlarge the comprehension of the mind, to transfer the attention from sensible to intellectual objects, from less to greater, from the present to the future, and so to associate, and, if I may so express it, to amalgamate the joys and sorrows of the present instant with distant objects, and with things past and to come, as in a considerable degree to absorb their influence, and to correct and modify their effects. The consequence is, that present sensations often possess very little efficacy either in deciding the judgement or directing the choice; and the external impression of the moment, though in itself vivid, frequently contributes in a very small proportion to the complex asso-

ciated feeling whether of pleasure or pain. This effect the discipline of life produces in all cases to a certain extent. There is no person advanced to maturity, and in full possession of his rational powers, who is not habitually more governed by ideal considerations, than by sensible impressions; or, in other words, who is not in his general conduct in life more influenced by his hopes and fears, by a sense of right and wrong, and by a regard to character, self-interest, and expectations of various kinds, than to the mere stimulus of present feelings of pleasure or pain. A man of common sense would be ashamed even to be suspected of the contrary. And such conduct, if in any case practicable, would exclude the individual who would be capable of it from human society, and would degrade him to the level of an infant, an idiot, or a brute.

But this effect of the discipline of divine providence is produced in the highest degree and to the most beneficial purpose in minds

that are the most enlightened and the best disposed, in persons of the highest intellectual talents and attainments, of the deepest reflection and the most comprehensive views, who can combine the largest extent of the future and the past with the present, and can represent them to the mind with the most commanding influence; whose hearts are vividly impressed, and powerfully affected by moral considerations, and especially by those views of the divine character and government, and of the present state and future expectations of man, which are exhibited in the christian revelation. These are the persons of whom it may be said in the sublimest sense of the words, that "they walk by faith and not by sight;" and hence the world has with great propriety and beauty been called "a nursery for great minds*."

The mind of man is the child of education, of discipline, of circumstances, of impressions

* See Dr. Priestley's incomparable Dedication of his Illustrations of the Doctrine of Necessity to Dr. Jebb.

from without and from within, from instruction, from example, from admonition, from encouragement, from reading and reflection, and from the pleasing or painful occurrences of human life.

Not indeed that all minds are constructed of the same materials, or that their original organization is equally perfect. Facts prove the contrary. For though it cannot be admitted, either, on the one hand, with the pleasing speculations of a benevolent philosophy, that mankind are born with an instinctive propensity to virtue, or, on the other, with the miserable dogmas of a gloomy theology, that infants are brought into the world loaded with guilt and tainted to the very core with sin, yet, neither can it be maintained with any appearance of probability, that all minds are originally equal, and that the difference between man and man in intellectual and moral attainments however considerable, is the sole result of education and mental discipline. It is an obvious

fact, that of children who are placed in circumstances precisely similar, and who enjoy the same means of instruction, the proficiency is widely different. One excells in memory, another in imagination, and a third in judgement. One soon learns, and soon forgets. Another learns slowly, and remembers long. Another excells in every faculty, in quickness of apprehension, in tenaciousness of memory, in readiness of recollection, in acuteness of discrimination, and with the utmost facility he outstrips his companions and competitors who possess equal advantages, and who apply with greater assiduity and perseverance.

Also, in the moral progress of mankind the difference is equally obvious. In children of the same family who have been educated with the same care, instructed in the same virtuous principles, subjected to the same prudent discipline, and spectators of the same edifying examples, one will, by his integrity and piety, by his active benevolence and his moral worth,

amply reward all the affectionate solicitude, and the vigilant exertions of his parents and instructors, and will become a blessing to society; while another, by a contrary disposition and conduct, will defeat the purpose and wound the feelings of his virtuous friends, and will involve himself and all who are connected with him in disgrace and ruin.

Nevertheless, though much must be allowed to the intellectual and moral constitution of human nature, it is still true, and it is a truth of the highest practical importance, that the human character is in a great degree the creature of education. By education that which is crooked may be made straight, and that which is originally correct may by early impressions and associations be warped and bended. Wholesome discipline, wise instruction, good example, a judicious mixture of indulgence and restraint, virtuous and interesting society, trials which exercise and invigorate, without overpowering the faculties and

the moral principles, may rectify a constitution originally unfavourable to virtue, and may exalt a mind naturally disposed to what is right, to an elevation of principle, and to a correctness and dignity of character which is entirely beyond the comprehension of ordinary and inferior minds. While, on the contrary, a discipline of an opposite kind, and an early frequent exposure to evil impressions may deprive a mind naturally susceptible of the highest excellence of all its amiable and virtuous tendencies, and reduce it to the lowest state of moral degradation. In this view, it may be truly affirmed that the most perfect characters owe their most distinguished excellencies, and their highest attainments, to the goodness of divine providence in placing them in circumstances favourable to moral improvement, and the most enlightened and the most virtuous of mankind will be most ready to adopt the humble language of the apostle, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'

Nor was any person ever more disposed to make this lowly and devout acknowledgement, than that truly venerable man whose recent removal from this frail and mortal state has given rise to our present meditations. The mind of the late highly revered and most excellent Theophilus Lindsey was cast in the purest moral mould, and his lot was fixed in a situation so favourable that his natural tendencies to rectitude were most successfully drawn forth, invigorated, and improved by the impressions of a virtuous education, and by the judicious and tender assiduity of those eminently pious and benevolent persons to whom was committed the pleasing task of cultivating a soil so richly disposed to reward their labours. The natural result of these combined and inestimable advantages was the early appearance of deeply rooted habits of piety, benevolence, and humility, and of an ardent zeal to promote the knowledge and love of God, and the good of mankind, so that

he might truly say with the pious Israelite, 'I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.' Of this early tendency to virtue and piety he speaks with great modesty in the affecting narrative which he published of that mental process which led him finally to the resolution of resigning his preferments, and his hopes in the established church. "May I have leave to say without blame, I was impressed from early youth with a love of truth, and virtue, a fear of God, and a desire to approve myself to him, which have never left me to this hour, though not always governed by them, nor improving so great a favour and blessing from God as I ought to have done*."

Upon the private virtues of this excellent man it would be an easy and a pleasing task to descant at large. But so humble-minded was he, so remote from all vanity and ostentation, and so indifferent to human applause,

* The Apology of Theophilus Lindsey, on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick in Yorkshire, c. vi. p. 217, ed. 4.

that I am confident, it would have given pain to his last moments of moral sensibility, if he could have suspected that occasion would be taken from his decease, to pronounce a laboured panegyric upon his virtues. Nor is it necessary to enlarge upon this copious topic. They who once knew him, who admired, revered, and loved him, can never forget the virtues of his heart nor the transcendent excellencies of his character. That deep commanding sense of piety towards God, which was the master-spring of all his actions and the true key to his whole conduct in life, that warm, active, diffusive, disinterested benevolence to mankind, that ardent love of moral and christian truth, that firmness and fortitude in the profession of it, and that generous zeal for its universal promulgation, that candour to the errors and infirmities of others, that exemplary self-government, that gentleness of manners, that humbleness of mind, that meekness of wisdom, that delicate sense of moral rectitude accompanied with the most un-

daunted courage, and the most inflexible resolution in the practice of what he judged to be right, that generous zeal for civil and religious liberty, that magnanimity of soul under losses and persecutions, that cheerful and thankful spirit which never deserted him, that christian patience which no sufferings could exhaust, that entire devotedness to God, that dutiful resignation to his will, and firm confidence in his promises which no adversity could shake, and finally, that dignified simplicity, that unconscious elevation of intellect and principle which is the characteristic of superior minds, this extraordinary assemblage of excellences, alloyed and tarnished with so very few of the failings of humanity, have left an indelible impression upon the hearts of all who had access to his person, and will embalm his name and endear his memory as long as the vital current shall continue to flow.

Nevertheless, I am persuaded, that the light in which it is most useful to contemplate this

venerable confessor, is that in which he appeared most conspicuous to the public eye, and in which, notwithstanding his uncommon modesty and humility, he did not shun to exhibit himself to the world. It is under this character that, being dead, he still speaketh with an emphasis and authority never to be forgotten.

The prominent feature in the life of this excellent man, was the public testimony which he bore to the great doctrine of the divine Unity, by resigning his preferment, and all his prospects of promotion in the established church.

Of other eminent persons who have made similar sacrifices upon the altar of conscience and integrity it might be said, that it is impossible that such persons should not have been provided for in the bosom of the establishment. Their splendid talents would have forced themselves into notice. To have left

such men to languish in penury and obscurity would have been a national disgrace. And would to God, that this reasoning were universally conclusive! But of this venerable confessor it is a known fact, not only that he was actually in possession of valuable preferment, but that he was also zealously patronized by persons of the first distinction, and the most commanding influence, who well knew his talents and his worth, and who were both able and desirous, I may even say, emulous, to advance his interest. Proposals were made to him, which, if he had judged it right to accept them, would infallibly have led to the highest dignities which a splendid establishment has to bestow upon the most favoured and most fortunate of her sons*.

It is also to be remembered that the bitter alternative which apparently awaited him upon the resignation of his preferment, was straitness of circumstances, the desertion and

* See the Memoir in the Appendix.

resentment of friends, and the taunts, the calumnies, and the persecution of enemies. His connexions with the non-conformists were very slender: few of them were capable of appreciating his worth*: and the great body of dissenters would be as little inclined to receive him into communion, as the church from which he had seceded.

In this arduous struggle therefore he stood almost alone. More than a century had elapsed

* In the number of those who understood the value of Mr. Lindsey's character, though differing from him in religious sentiments, was the late reverend, pious, and truly liberal Job Orton, the friend and biographer of Dr. Doddridge, and whom I am proud to have also numbered in the list of the friends and counsellors of earlier life. In one of his letters, published by Mr. Palmer, he thus expresses himself: "Were I to publish an account of ejected and silenced ministers, I should be strongly tempted to insert Mr. Lindsey in the list which he mentions in his Apology, with so much veneration. He certainly deserves as much respect and honour as any one of them, for the part he has acted. Perhaps few of them exceeded him in learning and piety. I venerate him as I would any of your confessors. As to his particular sentiments, they are nothing to me. An honest pious man, who makes such a sacrifice to truth and conscience as he has done, is a glorious character, and deserves the respect, esteem, and veneration of every true Christian." Orton's Letters, vol. ii. p. 159.

since two thousand pious ministers at once *, had voluntarily resigned their preferments and prospects in the church for the sake of a good conscience. But they, though many of them were considerable losers and some were great sufferers, by the largeness of their numbers encouraged and kept each other in countenance; their extraordinary case excited public attention and commiseration, and many thousands of their pious and respectable hearers forsook the church at the same time, and by their sympathy consoled, and by their liberality supported their faithful pastors in the season of trial. At the commencement of the eighteenth century some eminent divines of the established church thought and wrote with great freedom upon theological subjects. But though

* "A long list," says Mr. Lindsey, after having made an extract from Calamy's account of ministers ejected, and silenced for nonconformity,—"a long list, that does honour to human nature, and to our own country in particular, which has hitherto taken the lead in the restoration of God's true religion: for Wickliffe held up the light to Luther that came after him, and may England still hold it up to the rest of the nations!" Apology, p. 223. Note.

of these, some were scrupulous of accepting further preferment which required the renewal of subscription to the doctrinal articles, yet few of them felt themselves under obligation to relinquish their stations in the church. And for almost forty years previous to the resignation of the vicarage of Catterick, though much had been said and written in recommendation of a more catholic and comprehensive system of admission into the church, the lawfulness of clerical conformity had been but little canvassed. In all that period, I believe that one instance, one solitary instance only, that of a most learned, virtuous, and respectable clergyman in Ireland, had occurred, of the resignation of ecclesiastical preferment from a conscientious objection to the terms of conformity *. And this case itself, though in its

* This highly respectable clergyman was the late Dr. William Robertson, who, in January 1760, resigned his living in the diocese of Ferns, in Ireland, and was afterwards chosen to be master of the Free Grammar School at Wolverhampton, where he died in 1783, in the 79th year of his age. In his affecting address to his venerable diocesan, who was very anxious to retain

circumstances extremely interesting, attracted little notice in this country, and its consequences were sufficient to have damped the ardour of a mind less deeply tinctured with a sense of piety, and less resolute in adhering to what was right, than that of our departed

him in the church, and who offered him better preferment in it, he thus expresses himself: "In debating this matter with myself, besides the arguments directly to the purpose, several strong collateral considerations came in upon the positive side of the question. The streightness of my circumstances pressed me close: a numerous family, quite unprovided for, pleaded with the most pathetic and moving eloquence. And the infirmities and wants of age, now coming fast upon me, were urged feelingly. But one single consideration prevailed over all these. That the Creator and Governor of the universe, whom it is my first duty to worship and adore, being the God of truth, it must be disagreeable to him, to profess, subscribe, or declare, in any matter relating to his worship and service, what is not believed strictly and simply to be true." Robertson's Attempt to explain the Words Reason, Substance, &c., p. 241. Mr. Lindsey, in his Apology, p. 239, states the example of Dr. Robertson as operating very strongly on his mind to fix him in his resolution of leaving the church. "The example," says he, "of this excellent person has been a secret reproach to me ever since I heard of it. For I thought, and perhaps justly, that he might not have all the reasons of dislike to our established forms of worship that I had: and though myself, not without unknown straits and difficulties to struggle with, and *not alone* involved in them, yet have I not all those dissuasives and discouragements, that he paints forth in his affecting letter to the bishop of Ferns, subjoined to his instructive and learned work."

friend. But none of these things moved him. He left all and followed Christ. He felt it to be inconsistent with plain duty to continue to officiate in a church, the solemn forms of whose worship were in his estimation repugnant to that fundamental principle of the Jewish and Christian revelation the unity of God, and to the prescribed simplicity of Christian worship. And when after long and painful deliberation, united with fervent supplications for heavenly wisdom, he had at last made up his mind, and had discovered what appeared to him to be the direct line of duty, he then, without hesitation, in opposition to every tie of self-interest, to the remonstrances of his friends, and to the earnest solicitations of his superiors in the church, who with laudable liberality endeavoured by the most plausible arguments, and the kindest persuasion, to obviate his difficulties, to reconcile him to his situation, and to retain within the pale of the church the most exemplary of its ministers: in opposition, I say, to all considerations of this nature, and

listening to the voice of conscience alone, he resigned at once his preferment and his prospects, and descended to a private and a humble station. Thus, like the patriarch of old, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, with those whom he regarded as true worshipers according to the divine directory of the Scriptures, than to enjoy the highest honours and emoluments which an opulent and dignified establishment could boast, at the expense of peace of conscience, which alone can give sweetness to the comforts of life, and the want of which makes a death-bed terrible.

The picture which this venerable confessor has exhibited of the state of his mind at this interesting period, and of the process of thought and of reasoning by which he was ultimately induced to take this important step, is so natural and affecting, that I need make no apology for introducing an abstract of it, and chiefly in his own words *.

* The succeeding abstract is taken principally from the last chapter of Mr. Lindsey's Apology on resigning the Vicarage of Cat-

He relates that "after the usual time spent at school and the university, he entered into the ministry of the gospel, out of free and deliberate choice, with a full persuasion that it was the best way in which he could serve God, and be useful to men.

"He had always disapproved of some things in the thirty-nine articles of the church, he had not however much examined into the doctrine of the trinity, but supposed all was right there."

"Some years after, many doubts concerning that doctrine sprung up in his mind, which compelled him to a closer study of the Scriptures with regard to it. The more he searched the more he saw the little foundation there was for the doctrine commonly received. And in the end," saith he, "I became fully persuaded that there is but one God, the Father, and he alone to be worshiped." And, "in the course of time his scruples wrought so far as to put

terick, to which therefore it will not be necessary specifically to refer in every paragraph.

him upon actually taking some previous steps with a design to relieve himself, by quitting his preferment in the church." The circumstances which prevented him from immediately executing this resolution he thus ingenuously states.

1. "Being destined early, and educated for the ministry, and his heart engaged in the service, when the moment of determination came, he felt a reluctance at casting himself out of his profession and way of usefulness, which quite discouraged him. I did not," says he, "enough reflect, that the plain road of duty and uprightness will always be found to lead to the truest good in the end.

'God does not need
Either man's work or his own gift. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly. Thousands, at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve, who only stand and wait.'

MILTON.

2. "Many worthy persons, whose opinions varied little from his own, could nevertheless satisfy themselves so as to remain in the church, and to officiate in it. Why then," thought he, "must I alone be so singularly nice and scrupulous, as not to comply with what wiser and better men could accommodate themselves to; but disturb others, and distress myself by enthusiastic fancies purely my own?"

3. "It was suggested, that he was not the author of the things imposed: that all he did was in submission to civil authority, that he ought not only to leave his benefice but to go out of the world if he expected a perfect state of things. That if there was a general tendency in what was established to serve the interests of virtue and true religion, he ought to rest satisfied, and that in the mean time he had it in his power to prepare men's minds for it whenever there should be a disposition in the state to rectify what was amiss."

These considerations made him for a time tolerably quiet. "Not," saith he, "that I now justify myself herein. Yea rather I condemn myself. But as I have humble hope of the divine forgiveness, let not men be too rigid in their censure. Let those only blame and condemn who know what it is to doubt and to be in perplexity about things of the highest importance: to be in fear of causelessly abandoning a station assigned by Providence, and being found idle and unprofitable, when the Great Master comes to call to account for the talent received."

The ingenuous and honourable mind of this venerable man could not, however, long remain satisfied with such excuses as these. "His great difficulty was the point of worship: in comparison with which, he declares that his subscription to articles gave him very little concern."

And upon this subject he first endeavoured

to satisfy his mind with what is commonly called the Sabellian hypothesis concerning the Trinity, which had been proposed and defended by Dr. Wallis, the Savilian professor of mathematics in the university of Oxford, in opposition to Dr. Sherlock, who supported the doctrine of three distinct infinite minds. The Oxford professor contended, on the contrary, that the Supreme Being bore to his creatures, the three relations of Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, which is all that is meant when it is said that God is three persons. And that these three relations no more constitute three Gods, than his being the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, made him three Gods to the Jews.

This strictly Unitarian doctrine, sanctioned by that learned university, for some time quieted the feelings of our departed friend, who relates that he also availed himself of "all opportunities both in public and private to bear testimony to the great truth that *there is but one*

God the Father, with great plainness and without any reserve."

Thus he went on for a considerable time, till, as he expresses it, "from some *providential awakening,* he secretly, but firmly, resolved to seek an opportunity to relinquish his situation in the church."

"Upon further reflection he wondered how he had been able to satisfy his mind so long," with Sabellian qualifications of Trinitarian forms of worship, "or that he could bring himself to imagine that he was worshiping the Father in spirit and in truth, while he was addressing two other persons, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, in terms that implied their personality and deity, as much as that of the Father." And he observes, "that upon the same principles he might justify the deification and the worship of the virgin Mary."

"He could not," he says, "clear himself

from the charge of blameable duplicity in using language in praying to the One God, the Father, which would necessarily be misunderstood by the people who heard him, and would lead them to address their prayers to two other supposed intelligent agents." He also argued in this cogent and conclusive form: "God does not want my sinful act. It would be impious to suppose that he cannot carry on his government without it. But if any thing be evil and odious in his sight, prevarication and falsehood are such. And most of all an habitual course thereof in the most solemn act in which a creature can be engaged, the worship of the holy and all-seeing God."

He cordially joined in the application of the petitioning clergy for relief in the case of subscription, "hoping that it might lead to still further reformation:" but* "nothing favourable having turned out with regard to the

* Farewell Address to Parishioners at Catterick, p. 7.

great object of worship, he had no choice left, but either to change the public service of the church, and make it such as he could conscientiously officiate in, or quietly to retire." To the former he could not reconcile himself, regarding it as a violation of his solemn engagements when he was admitted to his benefice, and therefore, to use his own impressive language, "upon the most calm and serious deliberation, and weighing of every circumstance, I am obliged to give up my benefice, whatever I suffer by it, unless I would lose all inward peace, and hope of God's favour and acceptance in the end."

Thus did this good and faithful servant of Jesus Christ approve his integrity, by a calm and deliberate surrender of all his earthly possessions, and of all his fair and honourable prospects in life, for the sake of a good conscience, and with the hope of ample compensation hereafter, when he shall be admitted into the joy of his Lord. This memorable

event took place in November 1773, when the venerable confessor was in the fiftieth year of his age.

The motives to this important determination were so pure and disinterested, that they have obtained universal approbation, and persons the most hostile to the principles of this excellent man have borne the most honourable testimony to his character. The reasonableness and propriety of his conduct have been regarded as more problematical.

If indeed the Christian religion were a fable and its promises a jest, to make sacrifices to conscience under the expectation of future reward would be the extreme of folly. But if Christianity be true, and its sanctions divine, and eternal, it must be the highest wisdom to adhere to the doctrine, to imbibe the spirit, and to obey the precepts of the gospel.

Nor can it be justly deemed a question of

trifling concern to ascertain whether the object of religious worship be one, or many. This is a subject which many of the wisest and the best of men in early and in later times have taken great pains to investigate. And our Lord himself has declared, the first of all the commandments is this, 'The Lord our God is One Lord.' And, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.' Erroneous opinions concerning the object of worship fill the mind with confusion and perplexity. And false conceptions of the divine character have a baneful influence upon the moral conduct. For as the god is, such will the devoted worshiper be.

Errors concerning the person of Christ have lain at the foundation of all the corruptions of the Christian doctrine. The pride of heathen philosophy could not submit to acknowledge the authority of a crucified Jew. Ashamed of the humble prophet of Nazareth, it first maintained that he was a man in appearance only,

not in reality. Driven from this wretched and untenable position, it next raised him to the rank of a hero-god, by the invention of a miraculous conception. It then united to his human nature a divine Logos to sustain the part of the Christ. Its next invention was to substitute a created but a super-angelic spirit for the human soul, and to delegate to this exalted creature the creation and the government of the universe. By one gradation more the crucified man was advanced to an equality with the Father himself, the infinite, eternal, and only God. After this the spirit of inspiration was first personified and then deified. Next followed the deification of a woman, the humble and pious mother of Jesus. Then came in an immense train of saints and martyrs, canonized as inferior and tutelar deities, the objects of local and individual worship. Finally the rear of this host of errors is brought up by that paragon of absurdities the transmutation of a morsel of bread into a God, first to be worshiped, and then to be eaten. An

extravagance which far exceeds all the fooleries and fables of pagan mythology.

Thus we see the gradation of error; rising, indeed, from a slender source, but spreading wider, and increasing as it flows, till truth and virtue, religion and common sense, are overwhelmed by the boundless inundation.

These errors were introduced one after another, and passed with little or no notice in the dark and barbarous ages. But when learning began to revive, inquisitive and intelligent men soon perceived that these gross absurdities could not be of divine origin, and mistaking them for the doctrines of Christianity, they of course became unbelievers. The reformation from popery, by correcting the most prominent of these extravagances, gave a seasonable check to the spirit of scepticism. But still, many errors were retained in the reformed churches, and particularly the doctrine of the trinity. And while the doctrine of three equal

divine persons in the unity of the divine essence is regarded as an article of the Christian faith, thinking persons can never reconcile themselves to the Christian religion, but will either secretly or openly become unbelievers. And there is reason to apprehend that in this enlightened and inquisitive age, the doctrine of the trinity, like that of transubstantiation formerly, will, if not removed, weigh down Christianity itself.

It is therefore a great happiness, that in these times there have appeared men of great ability, of eminent piety, of unquestionable integrity, of extensive learning, and of deep research, who having examined the Scriptures with the most serious attention and impartiality, have demonstrated to the satisfaction of reasonable and unprejudiced persons, that Christianity teaches no such strange doctrine as a plurality of gods, or a plurality of persons in the divine essence. On the contrary, that it sets forth in the most explicit language, that to us there is

but One God, even the Father, who is the sole and unrivalled object of religious worship. And it is greatly to their own honour, and of unspeakable advantage to the interest of truth and genuine Christianity, that many of these upright and virtuous inquirers have borne their grave and public testimony, amidst losses and calumnies, dangers and persecutions, to this primary and fundamental truth.

It was therefore an act of superior wisdom, as well as a proof of inflexible integrity, in this venerable confessor, to relinquish his valuable preferment, and his earthly prospects, for the sake of truth and a good conscience: and the consequences of this virtuous self-denial have been most beneficial.

From the village which had been for ten years the scene of his ministerial labours, soon after his resignation he removed to the metropolis, deserted by almost every friend but his conscience and his God.

Excellence so distinguished could not remain long in obscurity. Many respectable persons whose minds were in unison with his own, and many others who, without embracing his opinions, honoured the disinterestedness and magnanimity of his character, visited him in his retirement, and proposed to open a place of worship in which he might officiate, and to form a religious society, the fundamental principle of which should be the worship of the ONE GOD.

"I can never be sufficiently thankful," saith he, (when reviewing these circumstances after an interval of twenty years) "to the bounty of divine providence in raising up a number of serious and generous friends *when alone, and destitute of all means to set on foot this place of worship,* to concur in the design*."

Amidst many difficulties, and not without some danger, this venerable man was enabled

* Farewell Discourse to the Congregation at Essex Street, p. 42.

to open a place of worship upon this spot, within less than twelve months after he had quitted the established church; and so great was the success of his ministry, and the zeal and liberality of his friends, that in a few years afterward he was encouraged and enabled to purchase the premises, and to erect the commodious edifice in which we are now assembled*.

For twenty years he continued to officiate to a most serious, attentive, and affectionate congregation, with great and increasing acceptance and success. Among the number of his stated hearers, he reckoned some persons of high distinction in rank and opulence: and what is of still greater importance, he counted many who were eminent for their knowledge of the Scriptures, for serious and rational piety, and for active and diffusive benevolence, which are the best ornaments of the Christian character.

* See the Memoir of Mr. Lindsey in the Appendix.

While the congregation continued in "this flourishing and harmonious state," to use his own words*, he resigned the office of pastor in the year 1793, in the seventieth year of his age, and the full vigour of his faculties, to the unspeakable regret of his affectionate hearers, and his numerous friends.

The strain of this Christian teacher's public discourses, through the whole course of his ministry, was eminently scriptural, and, in the proper sense of the word, evangelical. He delighted in explaining the New Testament, and in pointing out the practical consequences of the Christian doctrine†. And this he did with a simplicity, a clearness, and an earnestness peculiarly his own, which made its way immediately to the heart, and which can never be forgotten by those who had the happiness of attending upon his ministry.

* Farewell Discourse, p. 41.

† Farewell Address to Parishioners at Catterick, p. 14.

In addition to his public services this excellent man contributed largely to the diffusion of scriptural knowledge, and primitive Christianity, by many learned and judicious publications, in which he established with strength of argument, which bore down all opposition, and with a spirit of humility, of moderation, and of liberality, which won the hearts of his readers, those important doctrines of which the great body of professing Christians seem to have lost sight, but which in his estimation lay at the foundation of all that was excellent and valuable in the Christian religion. And after he had retired from public life, by his conversation and correspondence, by various useful publications, and by unbounded generosity, he continued to exert himself without intermission, in furthering the good cause to which his life was devoted.

A short time previous to his resignation of the pastoral office, he published a new edition

of the Reformed Liturgy in its most improved state. In this edition he made some omissions: particularly of the Creed, commonly, but erroneously styled, The Apostles': the reasons for which alterations and omissions he stated in a discourse which he delivered upon the occasion, and which he afterwards published. This is the Liturgy which, with a very few alterations, chiefly verbal, and all entirely approved and sanctioned by him, is now used in the public services of this chapel. Its great recommendation is, that it is adapted to worship strictly Unitarian, and at the same time recedes no further from the established Liturgy, than that formulary of worship appears to have receded from the simplicity of evangelical truth.

His last work was entitled "Conversations upon the Divine Government, shewing that every Thing is from God, and for Good, to all." This book was published when its venerable author was upon the verge of fourscore. It

contains his last thoughts upon many subjects of great moment: and it seems to have been intended by him as his final testimony to those great and interesting truths, which having long been the object of his faith, the theme of his discourse, and the principle of his conduct, he now felt to be the surest and best foundation of his consolation and his hope.

Infirmities now crowded fast upon him. But he lived to enjoy the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing that the great cause which lay so near his heart, was advancing with accelerated rapidity. That it had begun to take root, and was diffusing itself widely, among the inferior orders of society. That many had been convinced by his arguments, and encouraged by his example to avow truth at all hazards, and some even to quit situations of honour, and usefulness, to which they were bound by many ties of interest and affection, in order to bear their firm and public testimony to the important truth, that "*the Father alone*

is God, and he only is to be worshiped." He had the pleasure to know that this great doctrine was professed and taught not only in this place and in the vicinage of the metropolis, but that in many other towns in England, there were numerous and flourishing societies of Christians who hold and profess the same fundamental truth. That the great cause is not without advocates in North Britain, in Ireland, in America, on the continent of Europe, and even in France, where religious toleration exists under the grinding yoke of military despotism. Also, that this glorious cause was gaining proselytes every day of persons who understood their principles, and whose characters were an ornament to their profession. It added greatly to the satisfaction of his declining years to see that this Christian society which had been founded by himself; for the success of which he was so deeply interested, and which he had left so "flourishing and harmonious," continued still in a prosperous and a promising state. And particu-

larly that it contained so many young persons who were thirsting after scriptural knowledge, and who were solicitously inquiring for divine truth. And finally, it constituted one of the most valued comforts of his closing scene, that he had lived to see the completion of the Improved Version of the New Testament, a work upon the accomplishment of which he had fixed his mind, to the expense of which he had contributed with generous munificence, and to the execution of which, though it is much to be lamented that his personal exertions were wanting, in consequence of age and infirmity, yet his valuable publications yielded large and essential aid. This was the work which he cherished to his latest breath. It was the only reading which interested him for many of the latest weeks of his life: and the very evening before he was confined to that bed of sickness from which he rose no more, but a very few days previous to the final dissolution of his feeble frame, he desired to hear, and was pleased and gratified in attend-

ing to some portions of the New Testament which were read to him by a friend.

Such was the virtuous and honourable tenor, and such the peaceful close of the life of this sincere and exemplary Christian, this faithful pastor, this holy and venerable confessor; whose character, by the unanimous suffrage of all who had the happiness of intimate access to him, is allowed to have been as free from blemish, and to have approached as near to perfection, as human frailty would admit, or as that of any individual since the apostolic age.

He is now at rest from his labours—and if there is truth in a divine promise, his works shall follow him. This good and faithful servant shall in due time enter into the joy of his Lord, and shall shine as a star of the first magnitude, and of distinguished glory in the kingdom of God.

Beloved, venerable friend, Farewell. To

have been admitted as an associate in labour, and in friendship, with thee, and with thy most worthy and revered coadjutor Dr. Priestley, has been the chief privilege of my life. To have paid this last tribute of affection and homage to thy memory and thy virtues, has been the most honourable office in which I could engage. And to be united again to the same society, and in the same employments, in a better and happier state, is the sublimest felicity to which I aspire.

What then remains, but that we all who are acquainted with the character of this venerable man, those especially who were delighted and instructed by his public ministry, and most of all, those of us who having been honoured with his friendship were daily edified by his example, immediately set ourselves with greater earnestness than ever, to practise the instructions of our revered teacher and friend, to imitate his virtues, and, in our respective

spheres, to be followers of him, as he was of Christ.

Thus shall we best express our veneration for his character, and bear the most rational and honourable testimony to his excellences and virtues. And thus shall we lay a sure foundation, through the mercy of God, of renewed intercourse with our departed instructor, and of the perpetual and delightful enjoyment of his society and friendship, together with that of all the wise and good in all ages and countries, in a state where imperfection and suffering shall have no place, and where distinguished virtue shall receive its appropriate and everlasting reward.

THE END.

THE

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

O God! the God of hope, of peace, and of consolation! We bless thee for the glorious and delightful views which the Gospel of Jesus hath opened to us beyond death and the grave: that we are not ignorant concerning those who are asleep: that amidst the vicissitudes of life, and in the bereavements of death, we sorrow not as those who have no hope.

We adore thy providence in the removal of thine aged servant from a state of infirmity and suffering, to that safe and peaceful mansion where the weary are at rest, in sure and certain hope of a glorious morning, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, and when the good and faithful servant shall be summoned into the presence of his

Master, to behold his glory, and to participate in his everlasting triumph.

We bless thee, O God, that thy servant was permitted for so long a time to bear his firm and public testimony to important truth: that he was so long continued as a burning and a shining light, in which many had reason to rejoice: and that being dead he yet speaketh. Oh, let him not speak from the grave in vain. May the wisdom of his instructions, and the virtues of his character, his holy and blameless life, and his pious and peaceful end, still be the means of enlightening and convincing many; and of confirming those who are already well-instructed in their adherence to truth, and in the practice of virtue!

And may the great cause to which his life was devoted, and for the sake of which he made such important sacrifices, continue to prosper under the divine blessing! Whereso-ever the doctrine of the ONE true and living

God, and of his faithful and honoured servant and messenger Jesus Christ, is published, may it be cordially received, and practically cherished. May the worshipers of the One God even the Father, through the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, manifest the excellence and efficacy of their faith, by the holiness of their lives. May they never be ashamed of the doctrine of their divine Master, lest he also, another day, be ashamed of them.

May thy kingdom come. May the light of truth spread rapidly through the world. And from one end of the earth to the other may the name of the Lord be one, and his praise one.

We sympathize with mourning relatives. May the balm of divine consolation be poured into the wounded spirit. And may those anxious and active cares, which have been exerted with such unwearied assiduity in soothing and softening the sufferings of frail humanity, sub-

side into calm and dutiful resignation to thy disposing will: and into patient joyful expectation, of that glorious period, when virtuous friends and relatives shall meet again, in the full vigour of their intellectual and moral powers, perfect in holiness, in love, and in happiness, released from all the frailties and sufferings of mortality, and where the anguish of separation shall be felt no more. Thanks be to God, who thus giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now unto him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise, living, and true God be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.

APPENDIX.

MEMOIR

OF

THE REVEREND THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, M.A.

The reverend Theophilus Lindsey was born at Middlewich in Cheshire, June 20, 1723, O.S. His father Robert Lindsey, descended from an ancient family in Scotland, was a mercer in that town, and also possessed a lucrative concern in the salt-works which are carried on in the neighbourhood. He was a man of excellent character, and at one time in affluent circumstances; but his property was considerably reduced by the imprudence and extravagance of an elder son, by his first wife, whom he had admitted to a share in his business. His second wife was a lady of most exemplary character. Her maiden name was Spencer; she was distantly related to the Marlborough family, and previously to her marriage she had lived twenty-one years with

Frances, Countess of Huntingdon. By Mr. Lindsey she had three children. The eldest, Frances, a daughter, was born A.D. 1720: she was married to Mr. Harrison, a farmer in Leicestershire, and is now living, a widow in a very infirm state. The second, a son named Francis, born in 1722, was apprentice to a surgeon at Middlewich, and was unfortunately killed when he was seventeen years of age, by his companion, whose fowling-piece went off as he was getting through a hedge. The third was Theophilus, the subject of this memoir, who was named after the Earl of Huntingdon. Having given early indications of an amiable and serious disposition, and of a taste for learning, in which he had made considerable progress for his years, at a school near Middlewich, he, when very young, attracted the notice of Lady Betty and Lady Ann Hastings, who took him under their patronage, and who continued through life to behave to him with maternal kindness. By them he was sent to the free grammar school at Leeds, then under the care of the Rev. Mr. Barnard, of whose learning and piety Mr. Lindsey used always to express himself in terms of the highest approbation; and to whose skilful instructions and paternal attention he gratefully acknowledged

himself as indebted, not only for the progress which he made in learning, but still more for his early and deep sense of religion, his supreme love of truth, and his fixed habits of virtue. His vacations were usually spent with his noble patronesses, in the vicinity of Leeds, and after the decease of Lady Betty, with Lady Ann Hastings, at Ashby Place, near Ashby-de-la-zouch in Leicestershire*.

Having finished his education at school, he

* Mr. Lindsey's father died at Middlewich, in 1742. After his decease his widow and daughter were taken into the family of Lady Ann Hastings, at Ashby Place. Mrs. Lindsey resided with her noble friend till her decease in the year 1747, having lived to enjoy the gratification of the first wish of her heart, that of seeing her son in the pulpit. She was buried in Ashby churchyard, where a neat monument was erected to her memory by Lady Ann, on which it is recorded that she, while a child, had been the play-fellow, and a widow, the friend of Lady Ann Hastings, who was a sincere and affectionate mourner for her death.

Mr. Robert Lindsey had four children by his first wife. The eldest was John, born 1707, who by his extravagance reduced his father to difficulties. The second, Mary, born in 1713, of whom no account is preserved. The third, Thomas, born in 1715, died an infant. The fourth, Joseph, born 1716, went to sea and was drowned. Mrs. Mary Lindsey, the first wife of Mr. Robert Lindsey, was buried December 28, 1718, O.S.

These dates were taken from the parish register of Middlewich, and some of the circumstances were communicated by some old and respectable inhabitants of that town, who remember the family, and of whom inquiry was made by a friend in that neighbourhood, who very obligingly and readily complied with my request for this purpose.

entered as a student at St. John's College in the University of Cambridge. Here he passed through his course, and took his degrees with high reputation, and was elected a Fellow of the College. It was in his power to have attained considerable distinction in the department of literature, but his great ambition was to be a minister of the gospel. Accordingly, he relates, "that after the usual time spent at school and in the University, he entered into the ministry of the gospel, out of a free and deliberate choice, and with an earnest desire to promote the great ends of it."

Having taken Orders, according to the prescribed form of the established church, he was presented, in the twenty-third year of his age, by Sir George Wheeler, of Otterden, in Kent, a near relation of the Huntingdon family, with the chapel in Spital Square, a peculiar in the diocese of London.

A short time afterward, at the recommendation of Francis Earl of Huntingdon, he was taken into the family of Algernon Duke of Somerset, who had lately succeeded to the title and estate, and who was desirous of a clergyman of good talents and character to reside in his family as a chaplain and a friend. In Mr. Lindsey he found all that he wished: and

for the short remainder of the life of that amiable nobleman they lived together in the greatest harmony, and indeed, intimacy. After the decease of the Duke of Somerset, Mr. Lindsey continued to reside in the house as chaplain to the Duchess, who is better known to the public as the Countess of Hertford, the celebrated patroness of virtue, literature, and religion. At her desire he accompanied her grandson, the present Duke of Northumberland, then nine years of age, who was ordered to go to the continent for the benefit of his health: and of his assiduous and kind attention as a tutor and a guardian that illustrious nobleman still retains a grateful recollection, of which he has given substantial proof. After two years, his noble pupil's health being re-established, Mr. Lindsey returned with him to England, about the year 1753, when this noble family were desirous still to retain him with them as tutor to Lord Percy. This honour, however, he thought proper to decline, preferring a settlement as a parochial clergyman, which was the object to which his life was devoted. The late Duke of Northumberland therefore presented him with the valuable living of Kirby Wisk in Yorkshire, to hold at first only for a time, but afterward,

upon the death of the person for whom it was intended, for life. During his residence in Yorkshire, he was first introduced to the family of the learned and celebrated Archdeacon Blackburne: an event upon which he had afterward so much reason to congratulate himself. The Huntingdon family being unwilling that any but themselves should share the honour of providing for Mr. Lindsey, at their request he removed from Kirby Wisk, to Piddletown in Dorsetshire, a valuable living in the gift of that noble family. Here he resided about seven years: and it was at this time that his scruples concerning clerical conformity first arose: which however he silenced by the considerations which he has so ingenuously stated in his Apology, and with which he was afterward so little satisfied.

While Mr. Lindsey was minister of this parish he married Miss Hannah Elsworth, a stepdaughter of Archdeacon Blackburne, September 29, 1760. Upon the talents, accomplishments, and virtues of this extraordinary lady it would be a pleasure to expatiate. But let it suffice to say that she was in all respects worthy to be the consort of the venerable Theophilus Lindsey. This lady survives her excellent husband, whose latest articulation

was an acknowledgement of her kind attention to him: a sentiment which his looks continued to express when the organs of speech refused their office. It is greatly to be desired, that her health and vigour, much impaired by unceasing assiduity for years past to alleviate the growing infirmities of Mr. Lindsey, may for the sake of many be restored and preserved: and that the energies of her active and powerful mind may long continue to be exerted for the only object which makes life desirable to her, promoting truth and doing good.

It was probably owing in some considerable degree to his rising difficulties concerning clerical conformity, as well as to his love of retirement, and his attachment to the duties of a parochial minister, that Mr. Lindsey was induced, while he resided in Dorsetshire, to decline the handsome offer made by the Duke of Northumberland, upon his appointment to be Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in a letter from the Duchess to Mr. Lindsey, to be one of his chaplains, and, together with Mrs. Lindsey, to accompany the Duke and Duchess to Ireland, and to reside with them in the Castle of Dublin, till such preferment should offer as he would choose to accept. The person (Dr.

Dodgson) who was made chaplain upon Mr. Lindsey's refusal, was first appointed bishop of Ossory, and afterward of Elphin; and there can be no doubt that Mr. Lindsey, if he had desired it, would have risen at least to an equal station in the church.

The vicarage of Catterick in Yorkshire became vacant in 1763, by the decease of its worthy incumbent Mr. Harrison. This gentleman was the father of Mrs. Catherine Cappe, of York, widow of the late Newcome Cappe, well known to the public by various works, which equally display the superiority of her understanding, the ardour of her piety, and the benevolence of her heart. This lady was the early intimate and faithful friend of Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey, and, to her honour be it spoken, almost alone remained firmly attached to them in their change of circumstances. In order to be near Archdeacon Blackburne's family and other intelligent and valuable friends, Mr. Lindsey, by the interest of Lord Huntingdon, obtained permission to exchange his living in Dorsetshire, for the vicarage of Catterick.

In this situation he remained for ten years, respected and beloved by his parishioners, anxiously solicitous for their spiritual welfare,

diligently instructing them in the Christian Scriptures, and in their moral duties, and spending the whole of his income among them "for their present benefit and future happiness, seeking not theirs but them." Here he proposed "quietly to have ended his days," seeking no further preferment, nor accepting any if it should be offered*.

It was during his residence at Catterick that Mr. Lindsey became acquainted with Dr. Priestley, to whom he was first introduced at Archdeacon Blackburne's house, with whom he contracted an intimate friendship, founded upon a congeniality of principles and views, which was a great source of mutual happiness, which lasted without abatement or interruption till death, and which will doubtless be again renewed in a state, in which their noble and generous designs and exertions, so much beyond the comprehension of low and vulgar minds, shall meet with due honour and reward, and where the tongue of calumny, and the hand of violence, shall never more be permitted to disturb their peace.

While Mr. Lindsey continued the minister of Catterick his difficulties upon the subject of clerical conformity began to revive. And

* See his Farewell Address to the Parishioners at Catterick.

having been overtaken by a dangerous sickness, his virtuous mind was troubled by the apprehension of appearing in the presence of God, under the character of one who had *prevaricated* in the most solemn acts of worship*. This induced him to resolve upon seeking the earliest opportunity after he recovered, of relinquishing his situation in the church which was now become insupportable to him. In his Apology on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, he has given a most interesting delineation of the feelings, and the progress of his mind upon this trying occasion.

Mr. Lindsey engaged with great ardour and activity in promoting the petition which was presented to Parliament in the spring of 1772, signed by many respectable clergymen, the object of which was to obtain relief in the matter of subscription to the thirty-nine articles. This application though ably supported in the house of Commons, and particularly by that illustrious patriot Sir George Savile, met with the fate which it was natural to expect. Had the prayer of the petition been granted, it would by no means have removed Mr. Lindsey's scruples, who acknowledges that he and some others, "engaged in this petition, in hope that it

* See Apology, p. 233.

would lead to an amendment of many things in the Liturgy*."

After the defeat of this last attempt at reformation, Mr. Lindsey had no other inducement to remain in the church. In the month of November, therefore, in the year 1773, he resigned his preferment into the hands of his learned and respectable diocesan, Dr. Markham, afterwards archbishop of York. With this amiable prelate he had held a previous correspondence upon the subject, and many arguments and much kind persuasion had been used by him to obviate Mr. Lindsey's scruples and to retain him in the church. And after his resignation, the bishop acknowledged with regret, that he had lost the most exemplary parochial minister in his diocese.

This excellent man had no sooner relinquished his situation in the church, than, like others in similar circumstances, he found the step which he had taken to be attended with consequences which, probably, he did not expect. He was apprised that he was resigning affluence for poverty. But he also discovered that by his former friends he was now almost entirely deserted: and that some, from whom better things might reasonably have been ex-

* See the Farewell Address to the Parishioners at Catterick.

pected, were loud and vehement in their invectives against him, for a measure which was entitled to unqualified praise. But this improper conduct on their part did not ruffle the composure of his mind, nor excite even a momentary regret. He was firmly supported by the testimony of his conscience, and could look with compassion upon his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers.

Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey soon afterwards removed to London, where they were hospitably received by that excellent, learned, and truly liberal man the late Dr. Ramsden, afterward Master of the Charter House, with whom they resided for a short time, till they provided themselves with a small lodging in Featherstone Buildings, Holborn.

Here they were soon visited by many respectable persons, who expressed their earnest desire for the opening of a place of worship upon principles avowedly Unitarian. And by the kind and indefatigable exertions of a friend, they were enabled first to hire, and ultimately to purchase the commodious premises where the chapel is now erected.

Mr. Lindsey preached his first sermon at Essex House April 17, 1774, from Ephesians iv. 3. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the

spirit in the bond of peace." The discourse, with the devotional services, was printed, and has passed through three editions. The new chapel was opened March 29, 1778, with a very excellent appropriate discourse upon the Unity of God, and the simplicity of divine worship, from John iv. 23, 24. This sermon also, with the devotional forms which accompanied it, was published.

Mr. Lindsey officiated as sole pastor of an affectionate and flourishing society for about twelve years, when at his desire Dr. Disney was chosen to be his assistant: in connexion with whom he continued his ministerial labours for eight years longer; and in July 1793 he resigned his charge and withdrew entirely from public service. Upon this interesting occasion he published a Discourse addressed to the congregation, "which was at first intended to have been delivered from the pulpit, but he found himself too tenderly impressed to be capable of personally addressing his friends with any degree of vigour*." The text is from Matt. vi. 10. "Thy kingdom come." The design of this admirable discourse is to show, "the great importance of the principle of the

* See the Advertisement to the Discourse.

divine unity which binds and unites us together, and the relation it bears to virtuous practice," and that the principal obstruction to the progress of the gospel arises from the great errors which prevail in the Christian world concerning the unity of God, and the object of religious worship.

The first time that the author of this memoir had the honour of being introduced to Mr. Lindsey was in March 1789, when he was about to resign an important and on many accounts agreeable situation, in consequence of a change (by him very unlooked for) in his theological sentiments. By the influence and exertions of many liberal friends he was invited to a department in the New College at Hackney: an office which he accepted with the greater alacrity for the opportunity which it afforded of cultivating the friendship of Mr. Lindsey. In the year 1791 Dr. Priestley, having been driven from Birmingham by the disgraceful riots, was chosen by the congregation at Hackney to succeed Dr. Price, a man whose character is above all praise. While this extraordinary and much-injured man continued to reside at Hackney, the interviews of those friends who thought and felt so much alike upon the most

important subjects were frequent, and in a high degree interesting and improving. But this happiness was of short duration. In the spring of 1794 Dr. Priestley embarked for America: after which, his correspondence, though frequent and regular, but ill supplied the chasm which was occasioned by the loss of his conversation. Such however was the will of divine providence, and the beneficial consequences are already apparent. The emigration of Dr. Priestley to the Western Continent has been the means of exciting attention to the subject of rational Christianity where it was before but little known. The success has already been great beyond expectation. Societies for Unitarian worship are already established in Massachusets, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania. And as in that extensive empire no restraint is imposed upon freedom of inquiry, it cannot be doubted that truth will eventually, and perhaps speedily, be triumphant.

Mr. Lindsey, after his resignation in 1793, continued for some years to enjoy an uncommon portion of health, vigour, and activity, and that uniform flow of cheerfulness which is the natural result of a good constitution, and of the recollections of a well-spent life.

He seemed almost to be privileged with exemption from the infirmities of age. The first alarm was excited in the spring of 1801, when Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey were upon a visit for a few days at the seat of their learned and estimable friend Francis Maseres, esq. Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer. The weather being uncommonly warm for the season, Mr. Lindsey experienced a slight paralytic affection on one side, which however disappeared in a very short time. But the latter end of December in the same year he suffered a severe stroke, which at first excited the greatest apprehension. From this indeed he soon recovered surprisingly, so as to be able to finish his last interesting work, viz. Conversations upon the Divine Government. After this seizure he gradually declined in bodily strength and vigour, though he was free from pain, and his faculties remained unimpaired.

In this state of increasing debility a circumstance occurred which appeared for a time to infuse fresh vigour into his frame, and almost to add a new term to his life. This was the very lively interest which he took in the appointment of the writer of this memoir to be the officiating minister at the Chapel in Essex Street upon the resignation of Dr. Dis-

ney in the spring of 1805. Upon this occasion he again resumed his seat in the chapel, from which he had for some time withdrawn on account of his declining health.

He continued his attendance on public worship upwards of two years, till the first Sunday in November 1807, after which the state of his health compelled him finally, but reluctantly, to withdraw. His strength now rapidly declined, and his infirmities increased upon him. But though at times he suffered considerably, yet through the constant attention and great professional skill of a medical friend, and the unwearied and judicious exertions of Mrs. Lindsey and her attendants, his sufferings were greatly mitigated, and he continued upon the whole in a comfortable state, so that to the last week of his life he enjoyed the company of his friends, though he was not able to support much conversation with them. Mr. Lindsey declined so rapidly through the summer, that no hope was entertained that he would be able to struggle through the winter. But no symptom of immediate danger appeared till the latter end of October, when he was attacked with an oppression upon the brain. And though

this complaint yielded in some degree to the application of leeches and blisters, yet it was attended with a considerable degree of fever, which obliged him on Thursday 27th to take to his bed, where he remained apparently without suffering much violent pain, generally in a comatose state, taking little notice of any thing, and speaking but little, till Thursday the third of November, when he expired at six o'clock in the evening without a struggle or a groan. His remains were interred in Bunhill Fields, according to his own direction in the most private manner, at eleven o'clock in the morning of Friday the eleventh of the same month. Though by particular desire no person joined the procession, yet many of his friends, and some from considerable distances, showed their respect to his memory by attending at the grave.

The following is a catalogue of Mr. Lindsey's publications.

1. A Farewell Address to the Parishioners at Catterick.

2. An Apology on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick.

3. A Sequel to the Apology.

4. A Sermon preached at the Opening of the Chapel in Essex Street, April 17, 1774.

5. The Book of Common Prayer Reformed for the Use of the Chapel in Essex Street, with Hymns.

6. A Sermon preached in Essex Street on Opening the New Chapel, March 29, 1778.

7. Two Dissertations. First, On the Preface to St. John's Gospel:—Secondly, On Praying to Christ.

8. The Catechist, or An Inquiry concerning the only true God, and Object of Worship.

9. An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship.

10. *Vindiciæ Priestleianæ.* An Address to the Students of Oxford and Cambridge.

11. A Second Address to the same.

12. An Examination of Mr. Robinson's Plea for the Divinity of Christ.

13. A List of false Readings, and Mistranslations of the Scriptures.

14. Considerations on the Expediency of revising the Liturgy, by a Consistent Protestant, 1790.

15. Conversations on Christian Idolatry.

16. A Sermon on Forms of Prayer.

H. Bryer, Printer,
Bridge Street, Blackfriars, London.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE late illustrious DUKE of GRAFTON is well known to have been for many years a regular and exemplary worshiper in the Chapel in Essex Street, founded by the Reverend and learned Theophilus Lindsey, and consecrated to the worship of the ONE GOD, the Father. The lamented decease of this venerable Nobleman could not with propriety be passed over, without, what was judged to be, a suitable notice from the pulpit, and a tribute, however humble, of deserved respect to his Grace's memory. It was upon this afflicting occasion that the Discourse was delivered which is now presented to the Public.

A SERMON.

1 Cor. i. 26. *For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.*

Among the many errors and vices which abound, or are thought to abound in the age and country in which our lot is cast, a public disparagement and contempt of religion and its ordinances is, assuredly, not one of the most prominent. On the contrary, it may rather be said, that to a certain extent, the profession of religion, in some form or other, is the fashion of the day. That it would even be disreputable to avow absolute scepticism, and that the men who are really indifferent to religion, who neither observe its

rites, nor regard its sanctions, are nevertheless so far kept under restraint by public opinion, as to treat both the doctrines and institutions of religion with decent external respect. While on the other hand, great numbers, both in the superior and inferior orders of society, are loud in their professions of attachment to religion, zealous for what they conceive to be its doctrines, and rigorous in their observation of its forms.

For this fashion, or, if I may so express it, this popularity of religious profession in the present day, various causes may be assigned, whose concurrent influence sufficiently accounts for the effect.

The first and principal is the late rapid growth of what is called *Methodism;* which in its two grand divisions of Arminian and Calvinist, by the popularity of its doctrines, and the strictness of its discipline, under the direction of eloquent and active leaders, has overspread the country, and the influence of which is by no means limited to the vulgar and illiterate.

Another very powerful and very honourable cause of that respect which is paid to religion is, the distinguished and meritorious example of piety and good morals which is exhibited from the throne, and the beneficial influence of which extends not merely to those who are within the circle of the court, but to all the classes of society, and contributes essentially to diffuse through the nation a decent attention to the forms of piety.

Another less honourable, but not wholly inefficient cause of this moral phenomenon is, that foul and groundless clamour, which for political and party purposes was raised some years ago against a neighbouring country, as a nation of atheists and infidels. Whatever might be the design of those who began the clamour against a whole nation, on account of the sottishness of a few individuals, it still had the effect of producing a greater external regard to the public institutions of religion. For though the last thing intended by these political declaimers, was to excite a spirit of pure and rational devotion; yet being obliged in decency to assume that ap-

pearance of religion, the discarding of which they so loudly condemned in others, they contributed in a considerable degree, both by their language and example to give a religious tone to the public character.

To these causes may be added a fourth, namely, the present very awful and alarming situation of public affairs, the protracted length of a ruinous war, the hopelessness of its termination, the enormous expences of the country, the oppressive burden of taxation, the decay of trade, the ruin of manufactures, the unparalleled number of insolvencies, the death of those great men in whose stupendous abilities and energies public confidence was accustomed to be placed, the prevailing distrust of public men and measures, the lamented infirmity of the royal mind, the consequent paralysed state of the executive government, the alarming discontents which exist, and appear to be growing in some parts of the empire, and the want of a temperate, prudent, and conciliatory spirit, added to the extended dominion and continually accumulating force of the implacable

adversary of the country, all which circumstances combined have brought the nation to a crisis which it has never before experienced. They come home to the observation and the feelings of every individual, and have a very natural and powerful tendency to excite serious reflection, and to induce the thoughtful and the wise, while the tempest is raging abroad, to seek for shelter in the ark of the sanctuary, and to flee for refuge to the instructions and the consolations of religion.

These causes may account for that greater appearance of piety, and that greater attention to the forms of religion, which is the characteristic of the present times.

Of this appearance and parade of religion a large proportion, without doubt, is mere hypocrisy. Many are ostentatious in their devotions because it is the fashion. In many it is mere policy. In many it is the substitution of the forms of religion for the practice of virtue.

In some it degenerates into superstition. With such persons, religion does not consist in fearing God and keeping his commandments; in visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction; and in keeping themselves unspotted from the world: all their zeal is wasted upon holy things, and holy days, and holy books, and holy men, and holy orders, and holy places, and holy vestments, and holy postures, and holy ceremonies, and holy rites, and in short upon every thing holy, but holy living.

In many, this regard to religion degenerates into enthusiasm and fanaticism. Not satisfied with the consciousness of habitual integrity, and of sincere though imperfect virtue, they cannot bring themselves to believe that they are in a state of acceptance with God, unless they are somehow or other worked up to certain mysterious and inexplicable sensations. They must feel themselves to be thoroughly corrupt and vile by nature, and guilty, and deserving of eternal punishment for Adam's sin. They must experience a supernatural energy operating in them for their con-

version. Not content with the testimony of a good conscience, they can enjoy no peace, till by a sudden light darted into the mind, they are at once convinced that their sins are pardoned, and are raised in an instant from the depths of despair to the summit of divine consolation. In all they say, and in all they do, they must act under the guidance of the holy spirit: and thus they continually mistake the illusions of their own fancy for supernatural suggestions.

Again it is to be feared, that in many the parade of religion is the dictate of gross self-interest. By assuming the garb, the language, and the forms of piety, they know how to impose upon the simple and the credulous, and to enrich themselves at their expence. Nor can it be doubted, that with many religion is a matter of state policy.

But with all these allowances and deductions I am fully persuaded, that together with an extension of the external form, there is likewise a considerable extension of the reality and the sub-

stance of religion. There is much of what is genuine, practical, and valuable, though often mingled and debased with a considerable alloy.

It would be great injustice and ingratitude to a class of men, who, whatever their speculative errors, or their occasional extravagancies may be, have often, with the most disinterested zeal and heroic intrepidity, hazarded their lives in visiting mines, wastes, and forests, and carrying the salutary truths of religion to regions into which no one else would venture, and to a description of persons who were little better than heathens and savages, not to acknowledge, that in these perilous missions they have frequently been eminently successful. Little as I can be suspected of approving the doctrine, or of admiring the eccentricities of the Methodists, I nevertheless hesitate not to acknowledge that, in my estimation, they have been great benefactors to society, and have in multitudes of instances reclaimed to civilization and to virtue a race of men, who, previously to their pious exertions were hardly regarded as worthy of attention, or susceptible of moral

improvement; and that, in general, they have largely contributed to promote good order and good morals in the lower classes of society.

From the ranks of humble life, the spirit of piety and religion seems to have ascended gradually to the superior orders. There is certainly a greater proportion of persons in the higher classes of mankind who make a profession of religion at present than there was half a century ago. And though some, and perhaps a considerable abatement must be made on the score of policy, fashion and self-interest, and though it may be allowed, that these considerations operate in a much greater degree upon the superior than upon the inferior classes of the community, it cannot reasonably be doubted, that there is more of the truth as well as the semblance of piety in the higher orders of society than there used to be within the memory of many: and it is reasonable to hope, that a spirit of genuine piety is upon the advance rather than the decline.

In this state of things a difficulty occurs,

which cannot but frequently press upon many serious and reflecting minds; and that is, the very small proportion of truly religious persons who embrace and profess a rational and truly scriptural system of christianity. The fact, indeed, is not altogether so general at present as it was some years ago. By the blessing of God upon the writings and labours of some eminently pious persons, who successfully devoted their great abilities, their extensive research, and their disinterested exertions to the elucidation of the scriptures, the original simple doctrine of christianity has of late years been in a considerable degree extricated from the mass of error in which it has been entangled for upwards of fifteen centuries. This pure and rational system of belief has of late, in various ways, been exhibited to the public, both from the pulpit and the press, in its native and untarnished beauty: it has thus attracted a considerable portion of public attention, and the number of converts which have been made to plain and rational christianity, would exceed the belief of those who have not paid attention to the fact, or who are not

apprised of the congeniality of simple and unornamented truth, to the unsophisticated intellect of man.

These proselytes are chiefly in the middle and lower classes of society: but it must be acknowledged that at best they bear a very small proportion to the multitude who adhere to the popular system of faith. And in the higher orders, the number of those who profess rational and uncorrupted christianity, is very small indeed. The language of the apostle in the text is equally appropriate to the modern as to the primitive age. "You see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." This is a problem which may justly excite astonishment, and which requires a fair and reasonable solution.

There is such a striking difference between the plain doctrine of christianity, that "there is ONE GOD and ONE mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus," also, that

" God will judge the world in righteousness by the MAN whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead," which, as we learn from the sacred and elegant memoirs of the apostolic transactions, was the sum and substance of all which the apostles taught during their personal ministry; there is, I say, such a striking difference between this truly evangelical doctrine, and that subtle system of metaphysical theology which commonly usurps the name; the former is so plain, simple, and intelligible, so rational and practical, so worthy of the divine character, so admirably adapted to enlighten the ignorance, to correct the errors, to subdue the vices, to supply the wants, and to administer to the comfort of mankind, while the latter is so mysterious, so unintelligible, so contradictory to reason, so derogatory from the character and attributes of the Great Parent of the Universe, that it seems absolutely impossible that the former of these systems should not recommend itself to every enlightened and unprejudiced mind. Even

those whose different views and habitual principles lead them to reject it as erroneous, can hardly refrain from wishing it to be true. And one would think that it could not be difficult to prove to general satisfaction, that the plain simple doctrine which has just been stated, free from all mystical, metaphysical, and philosophical incumbrances, is the genuine doctrine of the christian revelation.

Let it for a moment be supposed that a person well instructed in the New Testament, but totally ignorant of modern creeds, and symbols, and forms of worship, should have an Assembly's Catechism, or a Common Prayer Book put into his hands, and should, at the same time, be gravely assured that the doctrines contained in these celebrated works, and the form of worship there prescribed, were wholly taken from the New Testament: that they might all be resolved into it and be proved by it.

Would not such a person, who knew nothing but the scriptures, be utterly at a loss to discover

in what part of the New Testament it is taught that, " there are three persons in the godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And that these three are one God, the same in substance equal in power and glory?" Would he not wonder where the learned members of that famous Synod who compiled this elaborate symbol of faith could find in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, that, " Christ, the eternal Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, and that he so was, and continues to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever?" Would not one who was learned in the scriptures only, be shocked beyond all measure to be told that it is taught in the New Testament, that, " the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin," and that " all mankind," without exception even of innocent infants, " by the fall, are under the wrath and curse of God," and that, for the offence of a remote ancestor, " they are made liable to all the miseries of this life, to

death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever?*" Would not a person who had acquired his knowledge of christianity from the scriptures only, shrink with horror at the thought that such absurdities and blasphemies as these should ever have been charged upon, or in any shape connected with, the rational, the holy, and the cheering doctrine of the mild and benevolent Jesus? And yet we see every day these glaring absurdities and impieties held up as the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and that, with the greatest sincerity and zeal, by men who have the New Testament in their hands, and who profess to receive it as the only foundation of their faith?

Further, the well-informed, and the well-disciplined inquirer into the New Testament, having there learned that the first and great doctrine of the Law is, "the Lord is our God the Lord is ONE," what would he think, upon being referred to a creed, which, professing to

* See Assembly's Catechism, Quest. 6. 17—22

teach nothing but christian truth, imposes, under the penalty of eternal damnation, a belief that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, none is greater and none less than the other, and yet they are not three Gods but one God: the Father Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty, and yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty?" Can it be supposed that one who had never read any thing but the New Testament, could ever have collected from it a creed so subtle, so mystical, so self-contradictory as this; the belief of which is enjoined under the penalty of eternal misery? It is impossible. It cannot be admitted for a moment. And yet how many are there who devoutly rehearse this unintelligible jargon, many times in the year, with the most unhesitating conviction that there is not a single proposition contained in it, not even its damnatory clauses, which may not certainly be proved by holy writ.

And what would a person who had formed his

rule of worship upon the precepts and model of the New Testament only, who had there learned, from the doctrine and the example of Jesus that the Father only is God; and the sole object of religious adoration, that the Father alone is to be addressed in the language of worship, prayer, and praise, what would the disciple of the New Testament think, and how would he feel when he took up a formulary of worship, professedly founded upon the scriptures, and containing nothing repugnant thereto, and should there discover an incessant repetition of the unscriptural doxology, "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost?" What would he think and how would he feel, when, in a solemn form of worship appointed for constant use, he should read a distinct and earnest prayer for mercy addressed to "God the Father," another to "God the Son," a third to "God the Holy Ghost," and a fourth to "a holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, of three persons and one God," together with many direct addresses to Christ, adjuring him "by his holy incarnation, by his holy nativity and circumcision, by his

agony and bloody sweat," to deliver his humble suppliants? Where, would he say, does the New Testament, the only authentic rule of faith and practice, where does it prescribe or exemplify a mode of worship which bears the remotest similarity to these strange invocations? Yea, rather, what book, what page, what sentence of the sacred volume does not bear the most explicit, the most solemn, the most energetic testimony against them.

According to this, which cannot be denied, to be a fair representation of the case, it seems impossible that any one should be so far blinded by prejudice, as not to see and acknowledge that a person who had read the New Testament only, and who had derived his system of faith and worship from the sacred volume alone, would not only have failed to discover those doctrines which are the main articles of the popular creed, and to have adopted that mode of worship which is now most generally approved, but that he would be beyond measure astonished and shocked to be told that these

doctrines were specifically taught, and these acts of worship were explicitly enjoined by Christ and his apostles. How then is it to be explained that these doctrines, and the worship founded upon them, should be so generally approved, and so strenuously supported by the great majority of professed christians, even by those who have the New Testament in their hands, who read the scriptures with attention, who appeal to it as the only infallible authority in faith and practice, and particularly by those, who, moving in the higher circles of life, may reasonably be expected to reason more correctly upon the subject, and to be in a considerable degree emancipated from vulgar prejudices.

There have been in all ages, and there still are many political believers, many who regard religion merely as a main engine of state: and who give their preference to that system which lays the strongest hold on the public mind, and the profession of which will secure to themselves the greatest political ascendancy. Whatever this may be, whether popish or protestant,

whether heathen, jewish, mahometan, or christian, to them it makes no difference. All are equally the objects of their contempt: and, in their turn, they will equally profess and prostitute all in subservience to their own party and political purposes.

But these are not the persons of whom I am now speaking. It requires but little charity to believe that the great majority of those, who profess faith in the national and popular creed, are sincere in their profession. It cannot be doubted that great numbers of them are sincere lovers of truth: that they value it as their chief treasure: that they would assert it at all hazards; and that they profess these doctrines, because they are convinced, and, as they think, upon the best grounds, that they are not only true, but that they are the primary truths, the peculiar doctrines, the pre-eminent glory of the gospel. And could they be convinced, which, indeed, in their circumstances, and with their prepossessions, is next to impossible, that these doctrines are untrue, they would

immediately renounce them, and profess what would appear to them to be the genuine truths of christianity. And the great difficulty to be accounted for is, that such persons should have originally embraced, and should still be so strongly wedded to a system which to many appears to be palpably inconsistent with the first principles of reason, and directly repugnant to the plainest declarations of divine revelation. Every effect must have an adequate cause. A moral phenomenon so striking and singular as this must originate in certain previous states of things, which it must be of great importance to analyse and detect. And it appears upon consideration that four principal causes operate upon the minds of persons of good understanding, and of upright intentions in the superior classes of society, to induce them to adhere to the popular and national creed, and to prevent them from adopting or professing a rational and scriptural system of faith. These are the prejudices of education, the law of fashion, the dictates of self-interest, and finally, erroneous conceptions of social duty.

1. The almost irresistible force of early prepossessions, and of fixed habits of thinking can hardly be conceived by those who have had little experience in the world; or, who have been inattentive to the phenomena of the human mind.

The popish doctrine of transubstantiation is I presume regarded by all protestants as the most palpable contradiction to common sense, and the grossest insult upon the human understanding which was ever proposed as an article of faith. And yet how many persons of the most improved intellect, and of the most virtuous character have received it without hesitation as a revealed truth and a sacred mystery: and have devoutly worshipped as a god the bread which they have eaten. But in similar circumstances the same causes will produce similar effects. And this, no doubt, is the true key to the solution of the phenomenon which is the subject of our present inquiry. Early prepossession, is the first and principal reason why so many persons of the best understandings, and of the best hearts remain

attached to the popular creed, and insensible to its many and glaring inconsistencies with reason and with scripture.

How indeed could it possibly happen otherwise? Mark the way in which persons who have any religious education at all, are commonly brought up. They are indeed taught to *read* the scriptures: but they learn to *say*, their catechism. They are taken to church or to other places of worship, where if they hear a chapter or two read, it is well. But the topic upon which the preacher loves to dilate, is the system of his belief, what he calls, what he verily thinks to be the grand peculiarities of the gospel. The child is taught to rehearse the Lord's prayer. But in public worship, his ears are perpetually assailed with prayers and doxologies to a holy trinity, to Father, Son, and holy Ghost. The church of Rome is justly animadverted upon by protestants for prescribing, or permitting ten prayers to the Virgin Mary, for one that is offered to God. I say not how often in the national Liturgy, prayers are ad-

dressed to Christ in proportion to those which are offered to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God, whom alone he teaches us that we ought to worship. The Creed called the Apostle's is indeed statedly repeated: and this symbol, if not wholly free from error, contains nevertheless many salutary truths. But with this, are often joined two other creeds, the fabrications, of a much later age, full of mysteries and contradictions, the belief of which is insisted upon as necessary to salvation. And these doctrines and this worship with which the infant mind is imbued before reason begins to exercise her authority, or memory to register events, are held up as the essentials of christianity from which it would be fatal to recede, and which it is dangerous even to call in question.

Now what is the natural, necessary, inevitable impression of such a system of education upon the mind of a young person? Unquestionably this. That the symbols, catechisms, articles, and liturgies, which are substituted for and in a

great measure supersede the scriptures, are not indeed nominally, but really, and in truth, of more value than the scriptures themselves, because they teach more explicitly christian doctrine, and christian worship. And that these sublime and mysterious doctrines, and this trinitarian worship are of the essence of the christian revelation. In comparison with these the plain and rational doctrine of the unity of the great object of worship, of the proper humanity of Jesus Christ, and of a future state of retribution by him are either rejected as false, or are treated with contempt, as frigid and insipid, and little better than mere natural religion. And these ideas, and feelings, are so mixed, combined, and amalgamated in the youthful mind, that there is hardly any known mental counter-process by which they can be decomposed, and separated again. When therefore by degrees the faculties are matured, and the season of reflection arrives, seldom does it become a question whether this strange compound is genuine christianity or not. But this fact being assumed, the inquiry not unfrequently

is, can such a system be true? Can the christian religion be a revelation from heaven? Nor need it to be told how often a negative is returned to the question by inquisitive and liberal minds, uninformed concerning the genuine doctrine of Christ. But where, happily for the individual, the affirmative is admitted, this strange system of belief takes possession of the mind, all further inquiry is proscribed, and every doubt is considered as criminal. Hence, it follows, that though they are christians in practice, they can seldom attain true satisfaction and unclouded tranquillity of mind. Their understandings are confounded. Their religious affections are distracted. And though they entertain a prevailing hope as to the safety of their own state, their ideas concerning the great mass of their fellow-creatures, must be gloomy and uncomfortable in the extreme. Such is the effect of early prepossession: can we then wonder that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, or induced to make profession of a rational system of christianity, when if they have

any religion at all, their early and most deeply rooted prejudices are necessarily in favour of the popular creed. And the difficulty will appear to be still greater if we consider further,

II. The almost omnipotent efficacy of fashion to fascinate the intellect, and to corrupt the principles. Fashion, is the prevailing judgment and taste of those who occupy the higher ranks of society. It is of all tyrants the most despotic, and often the most capricious, and the most cruel. Its dominion is universal. It usurps authority upon subjects which ought never to be submitted to its cognizance. It dictates religious opinion. And in this case, as well as in all others, its influence upon those who live within its empire, and who are in general constrained to yield obedience to its laws is truly wonderful. It frequently gives a bias to the understanding. That which is fashionable, however preposterous, is soon regarded as becoming. And opinions which are current in fashionable society are easily believed to be

true. There was a time, almost within the memory of some who are now living, when it was not thought discreditable to exercise the right of private judgment in the concerns of religion: when persons in the most exalted stations, and not by profession ministers of religion, were not regarded as eccentric characters for devoting their talents and their leisure to the study and the explanation of the scriptures, even though their conclusions did not entirely coincide with the popular and established creed*. The times are now changed. In the present reign, to its honour be it spoken, toleration has been confirmed and even extended. No pains and penalties are now inflicted upon defaulters in the faith. But the tide of fashion has ebbed away. And in these times,

* Viz. Mr. Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, Lord Chancellor King, Lord Barrington, Lord Lyttleton, &c. The late Queen Caroline the consort of George the second was a woman of excellent understanding and unaffected piety. This illustrious princess greatly encouraged religious inquiry; she was the friend of Newton, the admirer and patroness of Dr. Clarke and Bishop Hoadley. Much of the patronage of the church was in her hands. The dignitaries of the church did not then publish such Theology as is now in repute.

if a person of rank and consequence should either in conversation or from the press, or by frequenting a separate place of worship avow a difference in judgment from the popular and established creed, he would incur a charge of singularity, not to say a suspicion of disaffection, which however unjust or unfounded, is borne painfully and indignantly by a mind conscious of its own purity of motive and rectitude of conduct.

Such is the baneful influence of fashion when it is opposed to truth. Many are prevented by it from enquiring at all: many are misled in their judgments concerning revealed truth: and too many are deterred by it from professing what they believe to be right.

III. Self-interest prevents some from enlisting themselves openly under the banners of an unpopular profession. Such persons see the errors of the popular creed; they form a correct judgement concerning the doctrine of revelation. They would prefer worshipping in the

mode which the understanding approves; and in which the best feelings of the heart might accompany the language of the lips. But they have their fortune to make. They have a family to maintain. They are looking up to situations and offices, to the attainment of which the profession of a faith at variance with the public formularies would be a considerable obstruction. And, therefore, they "pray that they may be excused."—And let them depart, though sorrowful, like the youth whom Jesus loved but rejected, because being rich he was unwilling to forsake all for truth: and let them enjoy as they may, the wealth for which they pay so dear.

IV. Some, perhaps many, are restrained from making a public profession of unpopular truth, by a persuasion that they should in consequence of it, contract the sphere of their usefulness. They argue that while they remain attached to the general community of professed christians, and do not distinguish themselves by any offensive singularities, they retain many opportunities

of doing good, that they are sometimes able in a less public and less obnoxious way, to obviate prejudice, and to prepare the minds of some for the reception of truth, who would never listen to those who were teachers by profession, that they may at least check the efforts of bigotry and intolerance: and that they may be the instruments of protecting those, whose inclination and judgment prompts them to take a more active part in the diffusion of religious knowledge, and in opposition to popular error.

These are plausible arguments and with many they have great weight. Let every one judge for himself as accountable to his Maker: and let none presume to censure or condemn his neighbour. To his own master he stands or falls. Let me, however, be permitted to ask, whether any one can be more useful, than by exhibiting a grand example of virtue, and integrity, in sacrificing every secular consideration for the sake of truth and a good conscience*.

* Lord Chancellor King in conversation with the cele-

But this is a duty to which all are not summoned: and to which indeed very few are equal. It is a duty to the right performance of which deliberate inquiry, calm reflection, comprehension of views, disinterestedness of spirit, mental vigour and fortitude in no common degree, a lofty superiority to vulgar prejudices, and secular considerations, and above all a commanding sense of the divine authority, are essentially requisite. It is not to be wondered at that minds of an inferior order, though not wholly destitute of virtuous principle, though willing to make some sacrifices, though desirous of complying with the requisitions of duty as far as may be compatible with retaining their rank

brated William Whiston justified the signing of articles not believed for preferment, saying, "We must not lose our usefulness for scruples." Mr. Whiston expressed his surprize and regret at this, and asked his lordship, then Chief Justice, "Whether the courts at which he himself presided, would allow such prevarication or not." He confessed that they did not allow of it. "Then," said Mr. Whiston, "suppose God Almighty should be as just in the next world, as my Lord Chief Justice is in this, where are we then?" To which his Lordship made no answer. On Mr. Whiston's relating this story to Queen Caroline, that Princess said, "Mr. Whiston, no answer was to be made to it."

and estimation in the world, should in the season of great trial, when it is required of them—not to endure pain or poverty, or imprisonment, for that would be as nothing—but to submit to what the world calls degradation and disgrace, and to be pointed at by the finger of scorn, " far worse to bear than violence," it is not surprizing if such minds, in such circumstances should shrink from the conflict, and sink under the trial. And He that made the heart of man, that merciful Being who knows all its frailty, will, without question, in the great day of account, make every gracious allowance for human infirmity, and will not exact more than he has given strength to perform. But what will be the honour, and what the triumph in that day of final consummation, of the faithful servant of God, who has proved victorious in the arduous conflict, who upon the altar of truth and conscience has offered the sacrifice of all that the world calls valuable, and who from a paramount sense of duty has dared to encounter all the reproach of singularity, in the public profession of a

form of religion, which though not held in estimation by "many of the learned, the mighty, or the noble," he has discovered, or thinks that he has discovered, after the most diligent and serious investigation, to be most consonant to reason and truth, and to the will of God as revealed in the Christian scriptures.

Nor am I apprehensive of being accused of flattery when I add that such was the character, and such assuredly, if there is truth in the divine promise, will be the triumph of a venerable nobleman, who was for many years an exemplary member of this society, and a devout worshipper in this chapel: and whose late lamented departure from this life has given occasion to these reflections*. Of this excellent person it would surely be highly unbecoming to take a final leave, without attempting a grateful, however faint and imperfect tribute to his superior worth.

* Augustus Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton, was born in the year 1735, and died at his mansion at Euston, in Suffolk, on Thursday, March 14, 1811; after an illness of some weeks. His Grace had been declining in health upwards of two years.

The late illustrious Duke of Grafton succeeded to the title when he was very young: and being possessed of excellent talents, of liberal principles, and a graceful elocution, he was early introduced into public life, first in connexion with the Marquis of Rockingham, and afterwards under the auspices of the great Earl of Chatham. And by these distinguished noblemen whose names will ever be dear to Englishmen as long as England is a nation, the Duke of Grafton was recommended to offices of the highest trust and responsibility in the State.

To expatiate upon this nobleman's political conduct while he continued an efficient member of the Cabinet, would be quite foreign to the present occasion. Suffice it to say, that whatever might be his political errors, his intentions as to the public, were uniformly upright: and that, whatever consummate ability, combined with consummate malignity may have advanced to the contrary, it is an absolute fact, that had the Duke of Grafton's counsels been pursued, had not that nobleman been even deserted, and

betrayed by the men in whom he reposed his confidence, the miseries of the American war had been prevented*. And when he found,

* The Duke of Grafton was Secretary of State in the Rockingham administration which repealed the Stamp Act, in 1765. In the year following he was prevailed upon by Lord Chatham, though with much reluctance, to accept the office of first Lord of the Treasury, and unfortunately, contrary to the advice of that sagacious nobleman, he appointed the eloquent, but versatile Charles Townsend, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Scarcely were the new ministry settled in office, when Lord Chatham was seized with a nervous complaint which for many months deprived his colleagues of all the benefit of his assistance and advice. And in the mean time, the Chancellor of the Exchequer having without the concurrence of the rest of the Cabinet intimated that he had thought of a method of taxing America, without giving offence, the ministry found themselves under the necessity of bringing forward the port duties upon glass, colours, paper, and tea. But this imposition meeting with that resistance from America, which might easily have been foreseen, and Charles Townsend, who had died in the interval, being succeeded by Lord North, the Cabinet judged it expedient, that the port duties should be repealed, but were divided upon the question, whether the duty upon tea should not be retained as an assertion of the right. The Duke of Grafton strenuously insisted upon the repeal of the whole. But to his great surprize and mortification it was carried against him by the casting vote of his *friend* Lord Rochford, whom he had himself lately introduced into the Cabinet. Such was the origin of the American war. Lord Camden very soon resigned the office of Chancellor The sad ca-

that all his efforts to prevent civil discord were unavailing, and that every probability of con-

tastrophe of his immediate successor is well known. And the Duke not being able to prevail upon the Chief Justice de Grey to accept the seals, he also resigned his office in February, 1770, and was succeeded by Lord North. In the summer of 1771, the Duke of Grafton was again induced to join the administration, and to accept the Privy Seal, by the hope that he might prevent the quarrel with America from proceeding to extremities. But when he discovered that in opposition to his earnest remonstrances, government resisted all conciliation, were determined upon coercive measures, and would pay no regard even to the petition brought over by Mr. Penn, in 1775, which was emphatically called the Olive Branch, he finally withdrew from that administration, and having in a private audience, explained to the monarch his views of the state and dangers of the country, if the present measures were pursued, he became a temperate, but firm opponent of the ministry which lost America In the year 1782, the Duke of Grafton accepted the office of Privy Seal, under the administration of Lord Rockingham, and retained his situation after the death of that truly patriotic nobleman, and the resignation of Mr. Fox. Upon the accession of the Coalition ministry in 1783, he resigned his office, and never afterwards resumed his seat in the Cabinet. These facts, *which are alleged upon the best authority*, I state, not as a political apologist for his administration, for that is not my province, nor this the place, but merely to shew, that had the Duke of Grafton's counsels been adopted, America would have been saved to the country. The falsehood of the calumnies alledged by Junius, with so much elegance of language and bitterness of sarcasm is now notorious.

ciliation was at an end, he resigned his seat in that Cabinet where his wise and temperate advice was set at nought, and never returned to it againtill an administration was formed, the primary object of which was to give peace to the world. And when after a short interval, the administration of which his Grace was a member, was compelled to give way to an unexpected and irresistible coalition, the Duke of Grafton retired finally from the royal councils.

It appears to have been about this time that this venerable nobleman began to consecrate his leisure hours to the study of the scriptures: to which he was prompted by observing the very general prevalence of scepticism and infidelity in the superior ranks of society. And in consequence of much reading and diligent research, he happily became an enlightened and confirmed believer in the truth and divine authority of the Christian revelation. And having made up his mind upon this subject, he proceeded to study with the most serious attention, the sacred and authentic records of

the Christian religion, in order to attain a correct and distinct view of the Christian doctrine.

And the first circumstanhe which appears to have impressed the mind of this illustrious inquirer into the sacred oracles was the palpable discrepancy between the object of worship as revealed in the scriptures, and that to which religious addresses are offered in the public liturgy, and having canvassed the question with the seriousness and attention to which it is intitled by its gravity and importance he came to the solemn and deliberate conclusion, that the Father ONLY is God; and that he ALONE is the proper object of religious worship.

This conviction being once formed, it soon occurred to the candid and ingenuous mind of this noble searcher after truth, to consider how far it was reasonable in itself and compatible with duty to continue to countenance this gross corruption of Christianity by publicly attending

upon Trinitarian worship. And whether his clear conviction of the Unity of the great object of worship, did not impose the sacred obligation, of bearing public testimony to this great truth by joining a congregation of Christians who associated together for the avowed purpose of worshipping the Father only. This was a subject of much deep, serious, and painful reflection. And upon this occasiou, in order to attain complete satisfaction, he entered into a correspondence with the venerable founder of this congregation, in which he opened to him all his mind, and the result of which was a firm and deliberate purpose to attend statedly upon public worship in this chapel, a resolution from which he never receded as long as his health permitted him to go abroad.

Of the state and conflicts of his mind upon this important occasion, this venerable nobleman has given an interesting account in a small collection of papers drawn up at different times, which relate with the most unaffected simplicity the progress of his views and feelings, and of

which a few copies only were printed for the information of his family, and of a small number of select friends who might interest themselves in such inquiries. I trust I shall be excused, if I extract a few sentences from it upon this occasion, which in the estimation of all who are competent to judge, must do the greatest honour both to his understanding and to his heart.

"Let not," says he, "any of my friends, my acquaintance, or, if I may be allowed, the *world in general*,* imagine that I could presume to embrace a form of public worship, differing essentially from that of the church in which I was bred, without motives considered to be sufficient to justify my conduct. I am aware of all the responsibility which falls upon me on my own account, as well as on that of others. And

* This expression seems to indicate that his Grace had no objection to the publication of these papers after his decease: may it be hoped that his Grace's family will in due time favour the world with a present so truly honourable to the noble author, and so instructive and edifying to the serious reader.

if I had done this hastily, through levity, or without that consideration and ample investigation which so awful a decision requires, or without a full persuasion that many unscriptural doctrines and errors were contained and maintained in the articles, &c. of that church, I should indeed stand chargeable with a very high offence."

"But as I can solemnly aver, that I have acted from the sincere conviction of my own mind, I flatter myself that I shall stand acquitted, at least, in the estimation of those to whom I am best known. That the responsibility I have taken on myself weighs often on my mind, and is mixed with no small degree of alarm, I will not pretend to deny. Still, when I compare what I do feel, with what I should have suffered had I acted against the conviction of my head and heart, in a point so essential, of my duty to God and man, I find a comfort and relief, which the whole world could not, in the other case, have offered to me."

"However, I have daily to lament, and I do

regret with the most heartfelt sorrow, that I turned not my thoughts more seriously to religion, and particularly to all that related to that of Christ, until I had lost so many of the best days of my life in the pursuits of every senseless dissipation of the times, or in an indulgence of the fashionable vices of the age."

"Happy shall I be, if by any thing which has fallen from, or may fall from me, I should be instrumental in rousing others to an earlier attachment to the pure religion of the gospel, and to remember their creator in the days of their youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when they shall say they have no pleasure in them. Although a thorough change of disposition and of conduct has brought an inexpressible comfort to my mind, yet let no one imagine that I possess the same confidence which I know I should have felt, could I have viewed the days of my youth, even with as little reproach as I trust I have passed my later years. Of this one truth, however, let all young persons rest assured, that if they are reasonably

satisfied with themselves as they are, they would become infinitely more truly happy by drawing from the precepts of the gospel the rule for their conduct through life. And I may declare that in an advanced age, I am now enjoying so much more solid comfort by trusting to the mercies of God through the gospel of his Son, than I ever did in any of the days of my follies. Nor would I exchange it for any condition of youth, wealth or worldly joys, accompanied by a vicious course."

"My intercourse with the world raised in me a suspicion, which the observation of every day confirmed, that many persons, in the more elevated ranks of life especially, had little or no belief in the truth of the Christian religion. This suspicion increased my desire to examine with unprejudiced attention the principles on which the truth of Christianity was said to be founded. From the examination I saw abundant reason to conclude, that the Christian religion was promulgated to mankind by a person sent by, and acting under, the authority of the Supreme Creator and Preserver of the universe.

It was also apparent to me, that this religion had been corrupted from very early times by various means, and that these corruptions being mistaken for essential parts of it, had in my opinion been the cause of rendering the whole religion incredible to many men of sense, who on due examination, would soon have discovered that Christianity stood on solid ground, and that the corruptions of it alone formed the weak part which was exposed to the mockery and assault of every rash and daring unbeliever."

This extract, for the length of which I am persuaded that no apology is necessary, marks a mind of correct judgement, of deep reflection, of extensive knowledge of the world, strongly tinctured with rational piety, animated with the most diffusive benevolence, and breathing the most fervent desire of the virtue and happiness of the rising generation.

The Duke of Grafton's secession from the national Church did not originate in spleen or fanaticism, it did not arise from a disapproba-

tion of religious establishments as such, for of those under a liberal constitution he approved—nor from a dislike to the episcopal form of church government, for with this he was well satisfied—nor from any objection to the form of worship prescribed by the Liturgy, for to this he was firmly attached, desiring to recede no further from the Common Prayer than it receded from the purity of Christian doctrine, and the simplicity of the scripture model of divine worship. The reason of this virtuous nobleman's secession was clear, grave, solid, and unanswerable. In his estimation the law of Christ requires the worship of one God, and of him alone, while the liturgy of the national church addresses divine worship to three distinct divine persons, or to a Trinity in unity, to which the Christian revelation is a stranger.

His secession from the established worship, this venerable nobleman professed with the greatest modesty, and with an unbounded charity and candour to those who thought and acted differently from himself. No one could be further than

the Duke of Grafton was from wishing to impose his own views and convictions upon others. Having himself experienced the benefit of free inquiry, he was desirous that the same privilege should be extended to others without any restriction.

It is almost needless to add, that the conduct of this respectable nobleman uniformly corresponded with his profession, and reflected lustre upon his principles. To his regular, serious, and exemplary attendance upon public worship, while the state of his health admitted, many who now hear me can bear ample testimony. And when being disabled by increasing infirmities from worshiping in public, he requested that the offices of religion might be performed at home, the earnest piety and unaffected solemnity of his manner in participating in Christian rites was truly interesting and impressive. Chearful, instructive, and unassuming in conversation in mixed company, he never officiously obtruded the subject of religion where he knew that it would not be acceptable. The ostentation and pa-

rade of piety he held in the greatest contempt: but where he could use freedom, and knew that the subject would not be unwelcome, especially of late years, his favourite theme was religion, and of religious topics, that upon which he most delighted to insist was, the infinite mercy of God as revealed in the gospel. The only character in which he professed to appear in the presence of his Maker, was that of a penitent pleading and hoping for mercy.

He cheerfully concurred in, and liberally contributed to every temperate and judicious plan for promoting what he conceived to be the interest of truth and virtue: and his munificence upon extraordinary occasions, and especially to some distinguished persons whom he regarded as the victims of bigotry and intolerance, was worthy of the splendour of his rank and fortune. His charity to the poor was extensive and unostentatious, and he was pleased to employ those as almoners of his bounty who were best qualified to select proper and deserving objects, and to apply it in the most judicious manner. In every

relation of life he was just, kind, and exemplary. The sum and substance of his religion was love to God, and benevolence to man.

This venerable and illustrious nobleman is now taken to that mercy, the participation of which he so devoutly implored, and is waiting for that reward which is promised to transcendant virtue: a reward surpassing all comprehension, and in comparison with which, all the sacrifices which he made to truth and a good conscience, had they even been a thousandfold more and greater than they were, would have been nothing more than the dust of the balance. He is at rest from his labours, and his works have followed him.

What then remains but that survivors should emulate this splendid example of patient inquiry after divine truth, and of the open undisguised profession of it. Happy would it be if those who move in the same exalted sphere of society would catch the heavenly flame! What blessings would they be to mankind, and what a treasure of honour and felicity would they be laying up in store

for themselves! But, at all events, let not the benefit of this edifying example, which so long shone before our eyes, be wholly lost upon us. In our humbler sphere we perhaps may have some sacrifices to make in the cause of truth and a good conscience, though not equal to those of this distinguished and exemplary nobleman. We are enlisted in the same warfare, we serve under the same leader, we are called out to the same duties, we suffer the same hardships, we are exposed to the same dangers, and, thank God, we have the same encouragements and the same promises. Let us then exert the same resolution; let us press forward with the same vigour. "If we are faithful unto death, we also shall receive the crown of life."

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TO

THE REV. WILLIAM BROADBENT,

OF LATCHFORD, NEAR WARRINGTON.

My dear Friend,

When I took leave of you in September last, after having passed some weeks under your hospitable roof, I left you the happy father of the best of sons, who was then in the vigour of health, and just about to enter into life with the most flattering prospects.

How is the scene changed! I now address you as a bereaved and mourning parent; all whose earthly hopes and expectations have by an awful and unforeseen visitation of Providence been at once levelled with the dust.

But though in offering to your acceptance some serious reflections on the sudden removal of a darling child I address you as the deepest of mourners, it is with pleasure that I can bear testimony that you do not sorrow as one who has no hope. Your firmness and fortitude, your pious resignation, your dutiful and unreserved submission under this severe trial,

have excited the admiration of your surrounding friends. And you must pardon me, if without your knowledge and consent I have taken the liberty to exhibit your example for the benefit of others who like you in this world of vicissitude may in their turn be summoned to the house of mourning, and who may learn from you the admirable efficacy of right principles and views of the Divine character, and of a firm belief in the promises of the Gospel, to sustain the mind under the pressure of the severest trials and the most distressing bereavements.

Accept, my dear sir, the following Discourse *as a memorial of friendship, as a token of tender sympathy, and as a tribute of affectionate regard to the memory of an accomplished youth, whose respectable talents, amiable manners, and exalted virtues will never be effaced from the hearts of his numerous and lamenting friends.*

T. Belsham.

Essex Street, December 1, 1817.

A FUNERAL DISCOURSE.

1 Kings, viii. 18.—*Whereas it was in thy heart to build a house to my name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart.*

The whole nation is now clad in the deepest mourning on account of a young princess of the most amiable character, and the brightest promise; the hope and darling of the empire, who has been cut off in the prime of life, in the bloom of youth; in circumstances most interesting and distressing, even if the case had been only that of a private family, and much more as it is an event of the highest national concern. And her obsequies have lately been performed with a degree of solemnity and universal sadness of spirit, and with external signs of heartfelt sorrow, unparalleled in the annals of the country. Every one

has felt and mourned upon the occasion as though he had sustained a domestic loss. And to the true friends of their country the calamity has been greatly aggravated by the consideration of the very serious crisis into which the empire is reduced by this lamentable and unexpected interruption of the direct line of the descent of the crown. The grief which has penetrated the nation in consequence of this disastrous event has been more poignant, and more universal, than can be remembered upon any former similar occasion; and more so than any upon historical record. And the sad occasion can never be forgotten, and will never cease to be regretted by the wise and good.

But to this public cause of lamentation and mourning it has been the will of Providence, all-wise and good even in its most mysterious dispensations (and let that will be done, how contrary so ever to the fondest wishes and hopes of frail and erring humanity), in some affecting instances to add an infusion of private calamity which has caused the cup of bitterness to overflow with accumulated anguish. And it is to a case of this

kind, and to the reflections which arise from it, that I would now solicit your attention.

The late Reverend Thomas Broadbent, who was well known to most of the congregations of our denomination in the metropolis and its vicinity, as a young minister of great promise, and who lived in habits of endearing intercourse and intimate friendship with many who now hear me, was suddenly cut off, in the midst of life and health and vigour, by a very awful visitation of Providence a fortnight ago, at his father's house*.

On the first Sunday in this month he delivered a very affecting discourse in his father's pulpit, in which he delineated the character of a vicious youth, the slave of bad habits and criminal passions, who in the prime of life ruins his constitution, destroys his health, his reputation and his peace, and falls an early victim to his follies and his crimes. His feelings were greatly moved while he was preaching; and the discourse made a very deep impression upon his hearers. The week following he composed another discourse, in which he pourtrayed the opposite character, and de-

* At Latchford in Cheshire, within a mile of Warrington.

scribed the honour and happiness of a virtuous youth both in life and death. Before he finished his composition he heard of the decease of the illustrious princess; and under a strong impression of that calamitous event, he concluded his discourse with some reflections suitable to the melancholy occasion. He finished the whole at twelve o'clock on Saturday night, the eighth instant, when he retired to rest in his usual health and spirits, intending to deliver it the next afternoon. But Providence in its mysterious wisdom ordered otherwise. At four o'clock in the morning he was seized with a fit which the physicians pronounced to be apoplexy; and notwithstanding the best medical aid which could be procured, at six he ceased to be an inhabitant of this world*.

The sudden removal of an amiable and exemplary young man is at all times a very affecting event. But in this case there were many circum-

* His father, who slept in the adjoining chamber, being awakened by an unusual noise, hastened to his son's apartment, where he found him in a state of total insensibility, in which he continued till he expired.

stances of peculiar aggravation. He was the only child of a pious and indulgent father, who had taken great pains to give him a virtuous and liberal education: he was just come into possession of a handsome property: he had a reasonable prospect of being soon settled with some respectable society in the exercise of that sacred profession which was the object of his own free and voluntary choice; for the duties of which he had made long and diligent preparation, to the objects of which his whole soul was devoted, and in the right discharge of which it was his earnest desire and his fixed resolution to have employed his life. And this pleasing prospect was crowned with the flattering expectation of speedily forming a nearer and tenderer connexion which was the summit of his earthly wishes, and which promised all the happiness which human life has to bestow. Upon this fair and beautiful scene the curtain of death has suddenly fallen, and all its promised glories are now enveloped in the thick darkness of the tomb.

The incidents of the life of this amiable young person were few, though his virtues were many.

He was born at Warrington in the year 1793, and had the misfortune to lose an excellent mother when he was too young to be sensible of her loss. He received the first rudiments of a liberal education under his worthy father; and afterwards he passed some time under the tuition of a learned clergyman at Manchester, who was equally distinguished for his attainments in classical literature and for his skill in communicating instruction. When he had finished his school education; conformably to the expressed desire of his maternal grandfather, who had conducted with great ability and success a considerable manufactory in the vicinity of Sheffield, he for a short time made trial of a secular employment; but he soon found that it did not suit him. He had contracted a taste for literature, and an earnest desire of being useful in the Christian ministry; in consequence of which, with the full concurrence of his pious father, who highly approved though he would not influence his choice, he bade adieu to secular business, and entered as a student at the university of Glasgow. Here he passed through the routine of academical studies with a degree of regularity, assiduity, and

success, which secured the marked approbation of the professors, while his amiable manners and exemplary virtues won the esteem and affection of his associates. He was graced with many academical prizes, and particularly on account of his proficiency in Greek literature, and he graduated with distinguished credit*.

When he left the university he resided for some time at home, where he pursued his theological studies under his father's eye. And three years ago he came up to London in expectation of deriving peculiar advantage in the line of his profession, from the assistance and advice of friends, from access to libraries, and from the opportunities he would enjoy of attending the public services of eminent and approved ministers of different denominations.

During his residence in London, which continued for the greater part of the last three winters, he preached for some time with great acceptance

* The reverend T. B. Broadbent was born March 17, 1793: he entered at Glasgow, November 1809, and took his Master's degree April 1813, having received a prize in every *Gown* class, and in the Greek class, the first.

to a highly respectable congregation at Westminster, which was then vacant; and afterwards occasionally in other places. For two years he assisted in the classical education of some young men who were candidates for the Christian ministry; and of this department he performed the duties with such diligence, skill, and success, as to secure not only the improvement but the affection and gratitude of his pupils, together with the high approbation of his learned colleagues, and the managers and supporters of the Institution*. At the same time he was far from neglecting the main objects of his residence in London. He read, and thought, and studied, with great application. Nor ought it to be concealed, that the last edition of the Improved Version of the New Testament is greatly indebted for its correctness to the pains which were bestowed upon it by this learned and meritorious young man, in collating its various readings with those of the second edition of Griesbach's Greek Testament, and reducing the text to

* The Unitarian Academy, under the able direction of the reverend Robert Aspland, assisted at that time by the late ingenious and reverend Jeremiah Joyce.

as exact a conformity as might be with the text of that celebrated scholar*.

While he resided in London he formed a very extensive acquaintance with persons of different persuasions, and with some whose religious sentiments were very much at variance with his own: and such were his conciliatory and engaging manners that every acquaintance became a friend. And though he never concealed his religious principles, but avowed them upon every proper occasion in the most open manner, and defended them

* It would be ungrateful not to mention that the principal object of Mr. T. Broadbent's visit to London last winter was to assist the writer of this discourse in transcribing from short-hand his Commentary on Paul's Epistles, with a view to future publication if that should be judged expedient. It may gratify the curiosity of some worthy friends who are pleased to interest themselves in the subject, to be informed, that Mr. T. Broadbent transcribed the two epistles to the Corinthians, the first epistle to Timothy, and the epistle to Titus. All the epistles written from Rome, including that to the Hebrews, have been in readiness for the press some years ago. The epistle to the Romans is still in hand, and the author is proceeding with it, amidst numerous avocations, as fast as he is able.

with great animation, yet such was the goodness of his heart and the courtesy of his behaviour that he never gave offence; nor did a difference in religious speculations ever create the least shyness in social intercourse. His youthful appearance sometimes excited a prejudice against him: but this soon wore off with those who had opportunities of conversing freely with him; for with a youthful countenance he possessed a manly understanding and a matured judgment.

His morals were perfectly correct, and his virtue unsullied with a stain. With all the gaiety of his heart and the vivacity of his manner, no expression bordering upon indecency, indelicacy, or profaneness, ever escaped from his lips. His regard to truth and honour was stern and inviolable: nor could he restrain his indignation when he saw what he conceived to be the least approach to an infringement of these sacred principles in any who called themselves his friends. And upon such occasions as these, as well as upon any other when he thought it necessary, he would administer rebuke with a gravity and dignity which were highly impressive and generally efficacious.

The virtues of his character were founded upon the piety of his principles. His faith in the divine existence was the result of rational conviction, and it was firm and unwavering. His conceptions of the divine character and government were just and sublime, encouraging and practical. They produced in his mind an habitual awe of the divine majesty, which was apparent in the deep solemnity of his public addresses to the Supreme Being. He had thought much upon the subject of the Christian religion. He had studied the evidences of divine revelation both external and internal with great attention. He understood them completely; and with the most deliberate and unhesitating conviction he submitted to Jesus as his Master, and bowed to his authority as a teacher sent from God to reveal the doctrine of eternal life.

He had paid uncommon attention to the great controversy of the age concerning the person of Christ: and after very serious and diligent inquiry he attained a clear conviction of the simple humanity of Jesus Christ. But while he regarded him in respect to his nature as in all respects like

unto his brethren, he at the same time viewed his character with the profoundest reverence and veneration as the greatest of the prophets of God. It was also his wish, to the best of his abilities, by calm reasoning and gentle persuasion, to contribute his part towards reclaiming the Christian world from the gross errors in which it has been so long involved upon this and other important subjects. But though opposition to antichristian errors is an important duty, it did not in the judgment of this estimable young man constitute the whole or even the principal part of the work of a Christian minister. He regarded the doctrine of Christ chiefly as a practical principle; as the great message of God to man enforcing the practice of universal virtue by the awful sanctions of a life to come. As such he felt it in his own mind: and as such it was his desire to inculcate and urge it upon those who might attend upon his ministry. This he plainly evinced by the last discourses which he composed for the pulpit; both of which will I trust be shortly communicated to the public. And it was the great object of his virtuous ambition to devote

his best powers through life to this important service.

Thus eminently qualified beyond the common lot of his brethren for distinguished usefulness, it was in his heart to build a house to the name of his God: and he did well that it was in his heart. It was his wish to be useful in the church of Christ; to instruct his fellow-mortals in truth, in piety, and in virtue. And it was an honourable design; as acceptable in the sight of him to whom the heart was known, and the life was devoted, as if the offer had been accepted, and the desire fulfilled to its utmost extent. He did well that it was in his heart, and in proportion to his generous zeal will be his ultimate reward.

I now proceed to offer some suitable reflections upon this instructive but painful subject.

1. Let us adore the unfathomable mysteries of divine providence.

It is not indeed surprising that a mortal being should die in the prime of life, in the vigour of youth, in the bloom of health; at a season when expectation is most sanguine, when hope is most

flattering, when prospects are most fair. Events of this kind happen every day, and in every rank and station in life. They are indeed so common as not often to excite particular attention. And truly, when we consider the frail and curious structure of the human frame, the wonder is that it should endure so long; that it should hold out from year to year, or even from day to day, and from hour to hour.

The great mystery is, that such a calamity as death should be admitted under the divine government; or that, if such a termination of human existence should be necessary or expedient, it should not be confined to the aged, to the infirm, to those who are satiated with the enjoyments of life, or worn out with its troubles. Why does the destroying angel pass by the door of misery and anguish, which would open to him with joy; and intrude where he is not invited, and where his visits are most unwelcome? Why does he force himself into the mansions of youth, of beauty, of joy and hope; and issue his terrific mandate against those to whom, not only families and churches, but nations and empires look up as

their safeguard and confidence? These are mysteries in the divine government which the wit and reason of man in vain endeavour to explore, and to which they can only bow with profound adoration and implicit acquiescence. But,

2. Let not such events as these shake our confidence in the divine government.

When we see a machine which exhibits uncommon proofs of skill, and which is calculated to produce a most powerful effect, which has been a long time in preparation, and which after a great expense of thought and labour, and at a mighty cost, has been just brought to perfection, so as to correspond with the idea of the sagacious contriver, and to excite the highest expectations of the intelligent observer;—when, I say, we see such a machine suddenly dashed to pieces, by the very hand which made it, and its scattered fragments so dispersed as to be utterly incapable of being collected and repaired by human effort, whatever opinion we might form of the skill of the artist, we should surely entertain some doubts of his wisdom. And similar to these are the feel-

ings which are ready to force themselves upon the mind when similar disappointments occur in human life. But let us beware how we charge folly upon the government of God.

Our confidence in the divine administration depends not upon our discernment of the wisdom and benevolence of every particular measure, but upon the overpowering evidence which reason and the appearances of nature present upon the whole, that power, wisdom, and goodness prevail in an inconceivable degree in the works of God, and that the end proposed is good and not evil, happiness and not misery, and that, invariably and without exception. Also, that the universal and irresistible tendencies of things are to a still better and happier state. And these facts being admitted, impel us to the delightful conclusion, that a Being who is so incomprehensibly powerful, wise, and good, must be absolutely omnipotent, perfect in knowledge, and infinite in goodness: and consequently, that his work is perfect, without any flaw or defect; and that those events which to our narrow conceptions are most mysterious and inexplicable, are essential

parts of a plan not only wise and good, but wisest and best; indispensably necessary in their appointed time and place, so that they could not have been omitted without injury to the whole. And it is an indubitable truth, that events which in their immediate effects are most alarming and distressing to individuals, or families, or churches, or nations, would to a mind whose comprehension is sufficiently enlarged, be productive of pure unmingled satisfaction and gratitude. And even by those whose views are most limited they ought to be met with submission and resignation, not with murmuring and complaint. Nevertheless, it is requisite that affliction and bereavement should be deeply felt by those who are visited with them: otherwise they lose their proper effect of proving and purifying the heart, and of subduing the refractory will of man to calm and entire subjection to that of God; a state of mind which is essential to the highest happiness of a reasonable creature. Let us not then for a single moment suffer such calamitous events as these to diminish our confidence in the wise paternal government of God. But,

3. Let us improve these affecting instances of mortality as arguments for a future state of existence and reward.

It is indeed a delightful consideration that the index of nature points to a life to come. And such events as these are some of the strongest natural presumptions in favour of a future state of existence, activity, and reward.

The curious machine has been dashed to pieces just at the time when it was complete in all its parts, when it was furnished with all its powers, when it was fully prepared to act, and when expectation was raised to its highest pitch. And what can have been the purpose of the Sovereign Artist in this unexpected, this overwhelming stroke? It is true he does not want it, he can do without it, or he can at pleasure frame another of equal or superior workmanship, or he can perform his work and accomplish his purpose by instruments of inferior powers, of coarser construction, and less exquisite polish. Yet why does he cast away that which he has already made? Is God a capricious Being? does he hate the work of his own hands? and are the precious materials scat-

tered abroad, never to be collected and replaced again? Oh no! far be injustice and caprice from Him who is perfect in knowledge, power, and goodness. Infinite Wisdom does nothing in vain; and the instrument which he has fitted for his purpose he will make use of for his glory. And though human art would in vain essay to put together the scattered fragments, and to rebuild the ruined fabrick, nothing is too hard for God. Let but Omnipotence speak the word, and the sovereign *fiat* shall be instantly obeyed. The curious and complex machinery shall be reconstructed: every particle shall find its place: and the whole shall shine forth in greater beauty, energy, and perfection than at first: and this, even though ages of ages should intervene.

And will not his paternal goodness fulfill his benevolent design? Shall any of his rational and virtuous offspring have reason to say, "Lord, wherefore hast thou made thy servant in vain?" Hast thou endued me with rational and moral faculties? hast thou implanted these exalted feelings? hast thou placed me in circumstances in which I have learned to know, and fear, and love

thee? to dread thy displeasure as the greatest evil? to aspire after thy favour as my supreme good? to dedicate all my powers to thy service as my highest honour?—and wilt thou now, when I am just entering upon the work, when my best desires and hopes are upon the point of being gratified, at once, and without any previous warning, disappoint my fond expectation, my high and holy ambition? and wilt thou—O dreadful thought! cast me out of thy sight, and banish me to an eternal distance from God, and hope, and happiness, an exile from existence, and condemned to the blackness of darkness for ever?—Impossible! I cannot think so unworthily of the greatest, the wisest, and the best of Beings, my God and Father. There must surely be another and a better state in which my best affections shall be gratified, and in which I shall be permitted to employ my renovated powers in the service of God, and for the benefit of my fellow-creatures, under happier auspices, and with better success.

Surely this view of the case must be regarded as a very powerful argument in favour of a future state of existence and happiness by all who enter-

tain just sentiments of the wisdom and paternal goodness of God. And how delightful is it to reflect that the design of the Gospel is to confirm this glorious conclusion, to obviate every objection, and to assure the anxious mind, that "as Jesus died and rose again, so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him!"

4. Let us place confidence in the energy of truth under the protection of Providence, and let us not doubt of its ultimate triumph.

The truth to which I here particularly allude is a doctrine of the greatest practical importance, and the universal reception of which in its purity and in its power would render all mankind virtuous and happy. I mean the doctrine of the gospel in its original uncorrupted simplicity, that truly evangelical doctrine which the apostle Paul taught to the philosophers and other inhabitants of Athens, and for teaching which he was reviled and persecuted as an empty babbler, and as an impious innovator in religion, viz. that "God will judge the world in righteousness by that MAN whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given

assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."

This unspeakably important truth, this primitive and truly apostolic symbol of faith, is now, and for ages has been through the whole Christian world, so buried, and overwhelmed under an enormous mass of errors and corruptions, that it seems almost impossible for it to extricate itself and to make its way. And those who are employed in the arduous task of removing the rubbish of centuries, and of bringing truth to light, are comparatively so few in number, so deficient in means, and meet with such determined and cruel opposition from the interested or deluded partisans of prejudice and error, that their success seems at times almost hopeless, and they are ready to give up the case as desperate. They are more especially discouraged, when they see one of their fellow-labourers after another removed from their stations, and especially those who with the best principles and the most upright intentions, with the most enlightened zeal and the most desirable qualifications, were entering upon the service, and girding up their loins to the work.

But let them take courage. The cause they advocate is the cause of Truth: and Truth is omnipotent and invincible. It is the cause of God, and therefore it must ultimately triumph. If the instruments from which they expect so much are laid aside, or taken away, others will be found equally or even more efficacious. And in due time the cause of Truth, under the protection of the God of Truth, shall prevail through the world: and all the corruptions of the Christian doctrine which from time immemorial have disfigured its beauty, and veiled its glory, shall vanish before it as the shadows of the night are dispelled by the morning sun. And those of us who have had opportunities of observing the accelerated march of Truth within the last twenty or thirty years, can entertain no doubt as to its eventual success; and may close our eyes in peace, knowing whom we have believed, and joyfully assured that he will keep the precious treasure which he has committed to the charge of his faithful ministers, in regular succession from generation to generation, until that day.

5. Let those who are in the prime of life and in the midst of youth and health learn their duty.

And that is to prepare for death: for, by these affecting instances of mortality they are taught in the most impressive manner the important lesson that "in the midst of life they are in death."

But in what way are they to make this necessary preparation? Is it by keeping the mournful termination of existence continually before their eyes like a ghastly spectre to depress their spirits, to wither their enjoyments, to embitter their days, and to render them listless to the concerns and duties of life? God forbid! Nothing can be more unreasonable than such a conduct; nothing more pernicious, nothing more contrary to the will of God, to the law of nature, and to the mild and gentle spirit of the Gospel. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart and in the sight of thine eyes." Only remember, that "for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Never forget that you are reasonable and account-

able creatures. Maintain upon your minds such an habitual and powerful sense of the frailty of life and of a judgment to come, as may keep you within the bounds of innocence and temperance, and may quicken you in the discharge of every incumbent duty.

And do not think it necessary to be constantly brooding over the painful ideas of frailty and mortality. Rather indulge the hope of continued life, and prepare for the business and participate in the innocent enjoyments of life, as if you were assured of protracted existence. If length of days should eventually prove your lot, you will experience the benefit of being thus prepared to discharge the duties and to encounter the vicissitudes of each successive period of existence. And if your flattering expectations should be disappointed, if the number of your years should be cut off in the midst, and your sun should go down while it is yet day, you will suffer no disadvantage. On the contrary, like the virtuous youth whose sudden removal has given occasion to this discourse, you will have the satisfaction to reflect that you had prepared your-

selves to occupy your respective stations with credit and usefulness, and you will find in the end that like him you "did well that you had it in your heart."

6. Let us sympathize with the afflicted and bereaved mourners.

And let us not estrange ourselves in the hour of adversity: but let us share their griefs. Let us be indulgent to the feelings of nature and to the effusions of sorrow. Let us, where we can, administer consolation. Let us remind them of the goodness of God, and of his wise paternal government. Let us assist them to humble themselves under his mighty hand; to bow with submission to the awful stroke. And when the world with all its flattering and delusive promises is become an universal blank, and hope itself is fled, let us direct their views to a better state in which they will be exposed to no painful separations, to no bitter disappointments, and where "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes."

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." It softens, puri-

fies, and enlarges the heart: it well becomes those who are fellow-probationers in a state of discipline and vicissitude: it exercises and refines the best feelings of human nature: it is acceptable to God, and of good report in the world: and finally, it is obeying the precepts and exemplifying the spirit of the gospel.

7. Let those who are visited with trials and bereavements bow in dutiful submission to the will of God.

Let not their grief transport them beyond the bounds of reason and of Christian moderation: but let them be silent under the hand of God; acknowledging not only his right, but his wisdom, his faithfulness, and his mercy, in his most affecting visitations.

The spirit of a Christian parent under the most afflicting bereavement is so beautifully exemplified in the pious resignation of my respected friend, that I shall make no apology for repeating a few sentences from a letter which I have lately received from him upon this mournful subject.

"It is indeed a severe stroke, if I could call any thing severe which God does. Peculiarly severe as it regards my feelings and all my views and hopes respecting this world. But these perhaps were wrong, and stood in need of correction; even those which regarded my hopes of service and instrumentality in the church of Christ. We are gratified, and I hope not blameably, in being honoured as instruments in such a cause. But if the service which God requires be performed, and it most surely will, we ought to be satisfied. We have authority indeed for believing that it is good that it was in our hearts, though the service is denied us."

"But I feel the strongest conviction that this event was appointed in infinite wisdom and benevolence: that it entered into the original plan of Providence, with all its circumstances, the arrangement of which will not fail to produce those consequences both immediately and remotely which infinite wisdom and goodness has intended. Who then am I that I should complain? And I am confident that the distresses which I feel do not in any degree exceed what the bene-

volent and moral purposes of the divine government require."

"In such reflections as these I have experienced invaluable consolation. I wish to bow, and I hope I do bow with dutiful and pious submission to the appointment of God. I am sure it is all wise, all right, all good. My faith also in the great doctrine of the resurrection is cloudless and strong, and greatly strengthens my consolation."

Such is the support and comfort which just sentiments of the paternal government of God, and a firm habitual belief in the Christian doctrine of a future life are capable of administering to the pious and reflecting mind under the severest trials of the present state. To conclude,

8. Let us triumph in the prospect of again meeting our virtuous friends in a state where sin and sorrow shall have no place, where the sufferings of the present life shall be absorbed, and perhaps in the revolution of ages be forgotten, like the sorrows of infancy and childhood at the age of maturity; and where we shall pass an im-

mortal existence in the society of each other and of all the wise and virtuous in all ages, in progressive and continually accelerated improvement in knowledge, in benevolence, in devotion, and felicity. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again to the hope of life by the resurrection of his son Christ Jesus from the dead.

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, we triumph in the glorious truth, that all is well under the divine government; and that those events which are most mysterious, and which require the greatest exercise of faith and patience, are all ordered in wisdom and in mercy, and that in their respective circumstances they are essentially conducive to the accomplishment of thy great and glorious designs even when they appear most repugnant thereunto.

Impress upon our minds a just sense of the uncertainty of human life, and of the vanity of man even in his best estate; and so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

May we never arraign the dispensations of thy providence. May we bow with dutiful and unreserved submission to thy disposing will. Where we cannot see, may we learn to believe: and where we cannot unravel, may we learn to trust.

We sympathize with our afflicted and mourning friends. Pour the balm of divine consolation into the wounded spirit: and speak peace to the troubled heart. May the awful visitations of thy providence, however severe and unexpected, be received with silent and dutiful submission: and may the hand of God be adored when it takes away, as well as when it gives.

Dismiss us with thy blessing. While the dispensations of divine providence, in connexion with the discoveries of thy word, are teaching the most important lessons of wisdom, may the heart be open to receive instruction: and may the happy result be to quicken us in our preparation for that glorious state where virtuous friendships shall be renewed, and painful separations shall be known no more.

Now to God only wise be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.

Printed by R. and A. Taylor, Shoe Lane.

THE FOLLY OF VICE,

AND

THE WISDOM OF VIRTUE;

REPRESENTED IN

TWO DISCOURSES

BY THE LATE REVEREND

THOMAS BIGGIN BROADBENT, A.M.,

The first of which was delivered at the Unitarian Chapel in Warrington, on Sunday November 2, 1817:

The latter, which was finished on Saturday the 8th, having been prevented from being delivered the day following, by the sudden death of the Author on the morning of that day, in the twenty-fifth year of his age:

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT HIS INTERMENT,

BY

THE REV. J. G. ROBBERDS

OF MANCHESTER.

SECOND EDITION.

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1818.

Just published,

REFLECTIONS ON THE SUDDEN DEATH OF A YOUNG MINISTER:

A FUNERAL DISCOURSE,

For the late Rev. T. B. BROADBENT, A.M.

Who died at Latchford, near Warrington, November 9th, 1817, in the twenty-fifth year of his age.

Delivered at Essex-Street Chapel, November 22,

By THOMAS BELSHAM.

Printed by Richard & Arthur Taylor, Shoe-Lane.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The affecting circumstances under which the following Discourses were composed, and the reason why one only was preached, are related in the following extract from a Letter written to the Editor upon the sad occasion: which also explains the reason why they are now submitted to the public.

"Last Sunday afternoon (November 2) our young friend delivered a most excellent and affecting Discourse from Prov. vii. 6, 7. He delineated the commencement, the progress, and the death of a foolish young man running a short but profligate course of dissipation and vice: and he did it in a manner which proved his knowledge of mankind, and

his own utter detestation of sin. His delivery was highly animated, his feelings were frequently so much overpowered by the faithful but horrid picture he was pourtraying, as to interrupt his speech. His hearers were deeply affected with the subject, and interested in his own acute feelings.

"Yesterday (Nov. 8) he was employed in composing a Sermon which he had intended to deliver this day. This Sermon he completed about twelve o'clock last night: and S., who had been sitting with him, states that they then separated, and our now departed friend appeared in as good health as usual.

"Between the hours of four and five this morning Mr. Broadbent having awaked, heard an unusual noise in his son's room, and went to learn the cause; when, melancholy to relate, he found him in a fit which the physicians declare to be an apoplexy.

Drs. T. and K. were instantly sent for, but human aid was fruitless. He expired about six o'clock this morning.

"The awful and striking circumstance of our young friend's removal so soon after the delivery of one Sermon and the composition of another prepared in a style which, in connexion with his own sudden, though doubtless happy and peaceful death, renders the event doubly impressive, may perhaps make it desirable to give these Discourses to the world, as they may make a deep impression upon those who are entering upon life."

Agreeably to this intimation the congregation at Warrington, soon after the interment of the amiable author, made an unanimous and earnest application to their revered minister, that these Discourses should be published in connexion with the reverend Mr. Robberds's eloquent and pathetic address at

the grave, Mr. Yates having, to the great regret of many, declined the publication of the impressive Discourse which he delivered upon the sorrowful occasion to a crowded congregation of sincere and deeply affected mourners. My respectable friend at first hesitated, fearing that the compositions were not sufficiently correct to meet the public eye. But the hope of that great practical benefit which might justly be expected from Discourses published under circumstances of such peculiar interest, soon overruled his objection, and disposed him to comply with the earnest and unanimous solicitations of his friends. Under these impressions the Sermons were transcribed and sent up to the Editor to be revised and published.

The Editor however has taken fewer liberties than his respectable friend would probably have wished: certainly much fewer than the author himself would have taken had he

corrected these Discourses for the press. But in the Editor's esteem, the whole value of posthumous publications of this sort depends upon the conviction of their genuineness. He has only, therefore, permitted himself to make two or three verbal alterations, which were absolutely necessary to the sense. He trusts, however, that they will not even as compositions in their present state disgrace the memory of his young and lamented friend. They are written with great spirit, eloquence, and pathos, and with purity and propriety of language. They exhibit manly sense, and a generous honourable mind, considerable knowledge of the world, a strong and habitual impression of piety, correct views of Christian morality, and an ardent desire of promoting the interest of virtue and religion, especially in the rising generation. That a person so amply endowed for public service, and whose heart was so thoroughly engaged in the work, should have been so suddenly

cut off in the beginning of his career, is one of those deep mysteries in Divine Providence which baffle all human penetration, under which we must be content to adore in silence.

The Editor has nothing further to add but his earnest wishes and prayers that these pious practical Discourses, in connexion with the awful event with which they were closed and as it were sealed, may make a due impression upon the readers, and especially upon the hearts of the numerous companions and young associates of the author, for whose best interests he was most anxiously concerned, and whom it would be the crown of his glory to meet with joy at their next solemn and all-important interview.

T. BELSHAM.

Essex-House, Dec. 13, 1817.

THE FOLLY OF VICE:

A DISCOURSE

Delivered at the Unitarian Chapel, Warrington,
on the 2d of November, 1817,

BY

THE REV. T. B. BROADBENT, A.M.

A DISCOURSE.

PROVERBS vii. 6, 7.—*For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding.*

IN a dissolute and corrupted age, in which there are so many dangerous temptations, so many vicious examples, and so many circumstances which easily and insensibly lead the inexperienced youth into the paths of sinful pleasure, it is not surprising that we see vice so prevalent, and virtue so very little esteemed in the world. As it is the duty of every parent to be the guardian of his family from the danger and wickedness which surround them, so is it the equally important duty of the Christian minister to watch over and preserve the moral conduct of his hearers, by

showing them the absolute folly of vice, and the amiableness and beauty and importance of virtue; that they may not only feel an abhorrence of sin, but, from the strength of their good principles, be able to withstand it even in its most captivating form, and steadily to adhere to the practice of virtue. Most happy shall I feel, if this great object of my ministry is in the slightest degree answered in the case even of a single individual, by the appeal I wish now to make to his good feelings and understanding. The intention of my discourse is to show the exceeding folly of vice, and the wisdom and happiness of virtue; and I hope the attention with which I am heard will be equal to the earnestness with which I am going to address you.

The sinner then is a fool, even if the term of his natural life be threescore years and ten, and then he sinks into oblivion: but he is an infinitely greater fool if he assuredly knows that there is an eternal life which he is to live after death. If the present existence were the only period of his being, he is under the most contemptible infatuation; because

he is acting contrary to the most common ideas of human policy,—he is using to an immoderate excess those powers and propensities, a moderate use of which would make him happy,—he is gradually weakening the strength of his body and his mind, and thus rendering both a prey to disease. In the scale of society he is a degraded being, and shut out from the friendship of the wise and virtuous, which would otherwise have made him lastingly happy. I know no better way of illustrating and confirming these remarks, than by bringing to your notice the conduct of a sinner, and exposing his abundant folly in every period of his life. I shall not draw his vices and his sufferings with more deep and frightful colouring than nature and common experience will allow. Though, from the nature of my office, I profess to be the advocate of virtue, and I humbly trust its admirer too, I would not wish to give an unfair or exaggerated account of the life, character, and prospect of this most degraded and contemptible of our species.

Let me then first introduce him to your notice

during the tender and innocent years of childhood, under the wise direction and pious advice of serious and virtuous parents; with his inclinations all pure, his heart beating high with innocent pleasure, his habits regular and amiable, and his desires all in subjection to the judicious and experienced guidance of his friends. He understands and begins to feel the importance of the principles of religion; and though he is generally inclined to do a virtuous action, in order that he may meet with the approbation of his parents and merit their esteem, yet, independently of this honourable and commendable motive, he feels the value of a good conscience; and it gives him some pleasure to think that he pleases God, and is going on in that safe road which his friends have told him will lead to Heaven. There is something very interesting in this innocent simplicity of youth: and while in his morning and evening prayers he prays that God will lead him not into temptation, but deliver him from evil, his parents view him with complacency, joining their prayers with his, and indulging the pleasing hope, that if his life be spared he will become

a useful and valuable member of society, a comfort to himself as well as to their declining years.

We will suppose that he is now arrived at that most anxious and uncertain period of his life, between boyhood and manhood, when the character usually begins to be settled and fixed for life, when the passions are nearly arrived at their maturity, and temptations innumerable solicit their indulgence. He now begins to feel weary of the uniformity and tediousness of his usual mode of life, and eagerly desires to go forth into the world, to become acquainted with men and manners, and to enjoy the diversified pleasures of new and agreeable society. With the consent, perhaps, of his incautious and too credulous friends, he quits their company, and ventures into a hitherto unknown world. Here the trial of his virtue begins. We might, in sympathy to this innocent youth, wish that his virtuous habits were so thoroughly fixed, and his hatred of vice so complete, that, when left to his own direction, he would escape all the temptations that were thrown

in his way, and return home to his parents with a mind as pure as when he left their peaceful dwelling. But fatal experience proves that this is too flattering an expectation. It is highly probable, that if at this very inexperienced age he is left entirely to his own guidance, he will pursue the opposite course. At first indeed vice will be the object of his perfect hate; he will despise the society of the incorrigible drunkard, the profane, and the debauchee. He will immediately see that their conduct is morally wrong, and deserves the most severe condemnation. From such individuals, then, he has nothing to fear; but from those devouring wolves in sheep's clothing, who outwardly appear virtuous, and yet are inwardly full of all hypocrisy and uncleanness, he has every thing to dread. Guided by an open unsuspicious disposition, he attaches himself to their society; he finds, after a little experience, that it is most enlivening, yet innocent; that their conversation is spirited, their manners cheerful and more refined than those to which he has been accustomed; he begins to feel ashamed of the uncouth appearance of his dress, and particularly the sim-

plicity of his mind; he feels a disposition to indulge in what is manly, and to discontinue the observance of those little duties which appear to be effeminate for his years and contemptible to his companions. His mind, however, is not yet tainted with vice. The first vicious temptation which is offered to him he subdues. The victory he has gained is most pleasing and gratifying to himself; and though he perceives that it does not meet with the same approbation from his newly formed acquaintance, yet he makes a determination that he will not, either by their frowns or their intreaties, be led into any similar temptation that may present itself. Little does he foresee the result of that determination, and the overpowering influence of deceitful pleasure.—Suppose another temptation equally attractive to be thrown in his way. Imagine his virtuous feelings absolutely recoiling at the very thought of committing an act which his conscience tells him is wrong: nay, even witness his joy when he reflects upon the virtuous determination he has formed, and his great superiority to his wicked companions. But yet, against all this apparent

steadiness to his purpose, and triumph of virtuous excellence, are opposed the powerful and repeated intreaties of his vicious friends; the immediate enjoyment of the most exquisite pleasures; the threats of abandoning his society as unsuitable to their manly and generous understandings. Against these very powerful arguments, urged with the warmest vehemence and the most artful malignity, the resolute virtue of the unfortunate youth is unable to withstand—behold him now as a sheep led to the slaughter, entangled in his first snare. I need hardly ask whether he feels the reproaches of conscience. No doubt his private moments are occupied with much painful reflection, bitter remorse, and with the eager wish to return to the paths from which he has so unfortunately strayed. He seeks for amusement in the society of his wicked companions. They do every thing in their power to cheer his fallen spirits, and laugh at and despise the melancholy reproach of a foolish conscience, which he is ashamed to acknowledge, and is desirous to overcome. He is then hurried on into the commission of a second act of vice; and the

voice of conscience becoming more feeble, he more readily yields to a third temptation, till, by insensible degrees, guilt triumphs over virtue, and he falls a willing sacrifice to every sinful pleasure.

Behold him now a most complete sensualist, indulging himself in every gratification that can afford enjoyment to his corrupted heart. He has an ample fortune at his command to satisfy his most extravagant wishes; day after day he is occupied in seeking for new sources of pleasure, and lives upon the enjoyment of them. Variety and conviviality are sought after both day and night; and, like Solomon, he withholds not his heart from any pleasure. Life appears all sunshine before him. The world seems to have been made for his use, convenience and pleasure; his spirits are constantly elevated, and his heart takes its fill of joy. Possibly sickness and debility may occasionally afflict him; but yet these evils are more than counterbalanced by the constant and varied pleasures of his life. The reproaches of conscience he seldom if ever hears; and as for the

terrors of a future state, they appear ridiculous in the extreme. So perfect, so full, is his enjoyment, that he laughs to scorn all those who from choice can submit to the insupportable sameness and drudgery of virtue. He is astonished that he should have been so long the dupe of his own weak conscience, that he should have lived so long in the world without once enjoying those exquisite and varied pleasures which constitute its chief and only happiness.

How momentary are all vicious enjoyments! Solomon, after having given up his soul to every pleasure, and sought for every thing under the sun that could gratify his senses to the greatest possible extent, exclaims, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. I looked upon my labour which I had laboured under the sun, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit." Will not the unfortunate object of our present consideration make a similar exclamation when his dream of happiness is over? for I cannot imagine that any one who hears me can suppose that it will last for ever. Will the body never be worn down by daily debauchery,—

will the mind never lose its activity by constant riot,—will the senses never be cloyed by habitual and excessive indulgence,—will the whole constitution never be impaired by gross and almost hourly intemperance? Yes, my friends, and more speedily than we are aware of. There is no constitution, however strong it may be, that can stand a constant uninterrupted succession of vicious pleasures without feeling this natural decay. The human body can certainly bear a great deal of fatigue, and the mind can support a great deal of weariness and exertion; but can it be supposed that the body and the mind can support habitual debauchery, without some rest to recover their usual tone and activity? Do you suppose that a complete man of pleasure can continue in excessive and daily indulgencies for four years?—I believe that his constitution will not bear two years constant debauchery; and I am certain that in one year of daily intemperance the senses will be cloyed, the passions will be wearied, the mind will be tired of the exertion of finding out new sources of pleasure, and the body will seek for rest as its best enjoyment. But yet I will suppose that

for four years he lives and enjoys this constant pleasure, and not till then this exhaustion of his powers takes place. What then is the situation of this unfortunate object? His senses are all cloyed by indulgence, and every method which his mind could invent has been tried to administer pleasure. Now every method fails; and the only power which urges him to a continuance of vicious indulgence is the power of habit, which leads him, without any ability on his part to check it, to the further commission of vice, which renders him still more feeble and more degraded than before. He has however yet one pleasure left; the society of his wicked friends;—but how long will he be able to enjoy that gratification? We may naturally suppose that, by the continued scene of extravagant vice that he has passed through, his pecuniary resources will be very considerably if not totally diminished; and when that happens, then farewell not only to all the means of gratifying sinful pleasure, but even the society of his once valued acquaintance!

Here the scene of the greatest horror presents

itself. If we can imagine a situation more horrible and disgusting than another, it certainly is that of a thoroughly abandoned sinner, who has arrived at that period of his life when his senses have lost their power of pleasing, when money fails, and friends forsake him. Yet in this frightful situation are many poor wretches at this moment who have pursued the course I have described. From them you would learn a faithful description of their agonizing sufferings. Their emaciated bodies worn out by lingering disease and increasing debility, the horrid expression of melancholy in their countenances, their dejected spirits and lassitude of their frames, would afford a moral lesson far more eloquent and striking than it is in my power to deliver, and would make the very name and image of vice odious in your sight. Together with these frightful sufferings, I would ask, what are the thoughts of the poor wretch who labours under them? I know I am now addressing myself to many individuals who have a high respect and a grateful love for their parents and friends. I ask you, what are the reflections of the miserable sinner at this

last period of his vicious life? Left alone in the wide world without a single virtuous or sympathizing friend, can you conceive his thoughts being either soothing to his pains or cheering to his heart? Nay, can you conceive of greater horror than the constant reflection that days of virtuous innocence were once enjoyed, when his hours passed pleasantly along in the society of his virtuous family and in the midst of virtuous happiness and peace? Alas! where are now the members of that once happy family? Perhaps some of them are gone to the place destined for all the living;—and then the tremendous thought rushes upon his mind, "I too must die!" I will suppose that this horrid idea enters his mind when he is laid upon his bed of sickness and lingering disease, with scarcely the necessary means of support and without the society of a single friend. Eternity is before him, but it is tremendously frightful in his view. He can see no end to his sufferings, which he knows will be as excruciating as it is in his power to conceive. Repentance is too late. The prayers of his innocent childhood and the pious wishes of his parents are of no avail. His bodily

frame painfully worn out with wretched despair sinks into the earth. There is no friend to shed a tear of sorrow on his couch, not a single heart that can feel pity for his expiring groans. He is gone—and the world, even the wicked world, knows him no more. Here let the history of this wretched man close. Into the hands of a justly offended, yet, thank God, a merciful Being, do we commit him with all his vices and imperfections on his head.

I believe I have now given a faithful description of the life, character, pleasures, prospects, and death of the sinner. I have shown the insidious method by which he was first drawn into vice. I have allowed him the most unlimited range of vicious pleasure, and for a longer period too than is usually enjoyed by the sinner. Lastly, I have given by no means an exaggerated account of his excruciating sufferings and expiring moments. Is there any person who will not say with me, that this wretched man was a fool, the most absolute fool that can be imagined? For four years only of what he conceived to be real pleasure he

has sacrificed the peace and happiness of his whole existence; he has endured bodily and mental sufferings which have brought him to an untimely and afflictive death; and, what is worse than all, for four years enjoyment he has lost the happiness and must endure the misery of ages. When we come to reflect upon this case, we must say that the heart of man cannot conceive a more extravagant instance of folly. There is no lunatic however ungovernable who is so perfect a madman as this wretched sinner has been. The world calls that man a fool, who, standing on the edge of a precipice and with certain death before his eyes, should take the frightful leap to catch a butterfly that he sees fluttering in the air. But yet this man in comparison is a wise man; for he merely sacrifices his natural life for a delusive phantom, whereas the hardened sinner makes the incalculable sacrifice of eternal life. Strange is it that the world should be so grossly blind to this most glaring instance of infinite folly. Strange indeed is it, that creatures to whom God has given the faculty of reason, whom he has made capable of walking by faith and not by sight, should per-

sist in absolute vice, with the terrors of the Lord and the inconceivable misery of hell before their eyes. But yet this is really the infatuation of wretched man. He has very many weaknesses, but there is none which degrades him so low and reduces him so near the level of the beasts that perish as this liability to sin.

Before I conclude I would address a few words to the younger part of my audience, for it is chiefly for their improvement that I have drawn up this discourse.

If the advice of one who is about your own age, my highly and dearly respected friends, can be of any importance, let me earnestly and affectionately caution you against the beginnings of evil. The wretched being that our imaginations have pictured, was innocent and virtuous in the earlier part of his youth. Captivated with the fashionable pleasures of the age before his judgement could form a proper estimate of their real worthlessness, he was led by the insidious arts of false friends into the first vicious temptation;

THE WISDOM OF VIRTUE:

A DISCOURSE

Composed on the 8th of November and intended to be delivered November the 9th, 1817,

BY

THE REV. T. B. BROADBENT, A.M.

bosom, you may be sure that punishment will await you in another world. Be persuaded then, my young friends, to work while the day is before you : there is a night coming in which you cannot work. There is one reflection—and with the mention of it I shall conclude my discourse—which I would forcibly yet seriously address to parents and to those who have the important charge of educating youth. From your matured judgement and experience you must be well aware of the deceitfulness of sin, the danger of temptation, the strong power of vicious habits; and I hope that being Christians you know and you value the doctrine of eternal life. With this knowledge, it is your bounden duty diligently to watch over the charge which God has committed to your keeping. Let me intreat you then to bring up your offspring in the fear and love of God and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and in the uniform practice of virtue. And be particularly careful not to expose them in the wide world alone, till you are sure that their virtuous principles are fully established to resist its deceitfulness and

guilt. If I could but persuade those who now hear me of the folly of vice and the wisdom of virtue, I should possess a joy which is as pure as can enter into the heart of man—the satisfaction of thinking that my preaching was not in vain, and your hearing was not in vain.

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A DISCOURSE.

PROVERBS ix. 6.—*Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.*

THE subject of a late discourse was the folly of vice: and if I did not fail in my object, I proved the absolute infatuation of the sinner, even on the supposition that this present life is the whole of his existence; because he sacrifices the health of the body and the mind, the comforts of agreeable and valuable friendship, the true enjoyment of the good things of this world and the satisfactions of conscience, and endures the most excruciating miseries for the depraved and delusive pleasure of a moment. But on the supposition of another life after this, where the propensities and habits his course now creates will produce the most dreadful severities of misery, his in-

fatuation rises to a measure the most striking and awful.

I now wish to direct your attention to an equally interesting, and certainly a much less painful subject—the wisdom of virtue.

That a virtuous course is a wise course has appeared much more than probable from what has been already said on the folly of vice. For, if vice naturally leads to severe and continued misery both in this world and a future, it would seem to follow, that virtue (being the opposite of vice) would lead to a different and contrary issue, and that even upon this presumption it is the safest and best policy to be virtuous.

I shall greatly fail in my object if I do not in this discourse demonstrate to your satisfaction that virtue is not only the safest policy, but the greatest advantage, the highest pleasure of life; that no man can reasonably be said to enjoy happiness, to enjoy his being, unless he be virtuous. Let me however premise, that I pretend not to advance

any thing new on a subject so very old; nor do I wish to enter into any arguments respecting the nature of virtue, which are above the easy comprehension of the plainest mind. My main desire is to address a few observations to my hearers, which will be at once comprehended by all, and which every heart will feel; and I repeat the assertion which I made in my last discourse,—that if, favoured by the blessing of God, I shall have contributed to make even one individual more sensible of the wisdom and importance of virtue, and more disgusted with the baseness and folly of vice, I shall consider my time and labour more profitably employed than in almost any effort on this side the grave.

I. A virtuous state of mind is a state of natural health, regularly producing the sum of happiness its benevolent Creator intended.

You say that the body is diseased or in an unhealthy state when its powers are disordered, when its strength fails, the appetite is weak, the nerves are feeble in their action, the blood obstructed in

its circulation, or some organ of the body out of its natural state;—and you say the body is well, in a healthy state, when every member is sound and vigorous, and the whole corporeal machinery answers the purposes in all its functions, which were evidently and most benevolently intended.

For the very same reason, the other constituent part of man, the mind, is diseased or healthy according as vice or virtue prevails. When the mental taste is vitiated, when the appetites and passions are not under the control of the reason and judgement, when the palpable distinctions between virtue and vice are in many cases confounded, and temptations carry the man headlong; when the voice of conscience is overborne,—this is a diseased state of the mind; it is in a state plainly contrary to the manifest intentions of its wise and benevolent author—and what is universally the consequence? You read many of the consequences in glaring, dreadful, and awfully warning characters almost everywhere around you in the world. Others are less public and visible, but not less real, less numerous, or less

excruciating; and though they reach the eye or the ear less directly, their warnings are not the less awful and important. All these severe, these aggravated mental sufferings are proofs of a diseased state of the mind; they are contrary to the intentions of nature in the structure of the mind. Vice is the disorder,—vice in some or other of its species has produced it all.

But look at the mind where vice has made none of these impressions, or where these impressions are few and feeble; then you see in its operations and their consequences the benevolent intentions of God. All is harmony and peace. Domestic and moral pleasures flow from all the workings of such a state of mind, and flow in an uninterrupted stream. The mind is in a healthy state, its powers are vigorous, and their actions productive of what God intended. A virtuous state of the mind is a healthy state, it is the state nature designed.

But this is not all. The mind remaining virtuous, its moral powers advance, and consequently

its pleasures increase. And where such a mind is enlightened by correct views of what divine revelation unfolds and teaches, it delights to expatiate on the revealed character of God, on his unerring wisdom and boundless benevolence in his government of the world, and on the great and all-interesting truths contained in the Christian doctrine. The healthy mind has here the noblest materials to work upon; it perceives and it appretiates the strongest considerations against temptations to sin; it rises to a just abhorrence of all vice, and to a higher esteem and love of virtue. Love to God and love to man now prevail. The spirit of general benevolence prevails. This is the healthy state of the mind, this is the state which God intended. Now I call you to consider the pleasures proceeding from such a state, the sum of these pleasures, their nature, and their permanence. Compare them with what are called the pleasures of vice. Contrast these honourable and exalted joys with the folly, the degradation, the miseries of a dissipated and wicked life.

In my former discourse I addressed myself to

the young. Let me here call upon my fellows, my companions, those of my own age, to consider seriously what I have been now saying. Now is the time to correct the mind wherever it has erred, the time to give reason and the principles of sound religion their proper sway, to cultivate virtuous dispositions, to generate virtuous habits. Health or disease, honour or degradation, happiness or misery, now stand before you for your choice; and these alternatives appear in their most awful importance. Can you hesitate? To hesitate is madness. "Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding."

But I know there are other surmises, which in ignorant minds weigh against the reasons for a life of virtue;—that it is a dull, spiritless course, and full of checks and restraints.

Now in opposition to all such groundless presumptions I proceed to maintain that—

II. The enjoyments resulting from virtue are not only more exalted in their nature, but they are

far more numerous and far more varied than the presumed enjoyments of vice.

The world is very greatly mistaken in supposing that a man of virtue submits to many privations and much self-denial, and that he leads a dull and joyless life. They whose moral taste has been depraved and who have got into the ways of sin, may conceive these ideas of a virtuous course; but they do not consider that the men of virtue have risen to very different propensities and habits; and that what these would now call, and find to be restraints, are no restraints to those, but cheerful and delightful compliances. So far are these allegations from being founded in fact; I affirm with confidence, that the virtuous man through his whole course has fewer privations, much less self-denial, more exquisite and numerous pleasures, than the most favoured individual in the opposite course; and that, the whole case considered, he leads a much happier life than the world has any idea of. Yet such is the miserable infatuation of mankind, that they seem wilfully ignorant of this plainest of all facts; and capti-

vated by the gaudy appearance of vice, pursue it with unceasing eagerness. Little, very little do they think of the privations of vice, and the almost infinite sacrifices they make by a departure from the strict line of virtue. There is not one species of vice which does not oblige a man to submit to many painful sacrifices.

What are the sacrifices of the miser? His principal object is the hoarding up of money, and the real or supposed pleasure of seeing his store of wealth gradually increasing.

We will suppose he attains his wishes. I ask, what enjoyments has he given up for the sake of gratifying this single pleasure? which in every rational estimation cannot be deemed a pleasure. He has resigned every gratification arising from the proper use of the provisions and liberal bounties of life: he has almost denied himself its necessary comforts and even support: he has given up the privileges and blessings of society; and he cannot be ignorant that, in the esteem of the great mass of mankind, he is one of the most mean and

despicable beings the world has in it ;—and for what end ?—his object and his way to it expose him to constant ridicule and contempt.

And what again are the sacrifices of the fraudulent ? He gives up almost the whole peace of life in contriving schemes of deception, and in anxious and miserable fears of detection. If detected, which generally happens, his object is gone, punishment perhaps succeeds : at all events his credit is destroyed, his resources fail, and he is deserted by all the world.

What are the sacrifices of that man who wades through scenes of crime to gain the bubble reputation, to gratify mere vanity ? Honourable independence in the foremost place, which raises a man above his fellows; honourable independence, which disdains the cringing petty meannesses which some submit to, and which render them despicable in the eyes of others as well as their own.

Finally : Contemplate all the dreadful sacri-

fices of the drunkard and the sensualist. There is no vice which, indulged in, does not render a man a slave, in confining his low enjoyments within a very narrow compass, and debarring him from the numberless pleasures which the man of virtue enjoys.

I ask now, what are the sacrifices of virtue? Are there any? Yes, I am answered by the man of the world: A man cannot be strictly virtuous without meeting with the sneers and derision of the world. The sneers and derision of the world, forsooth! What classes of the world treat him in this contemptuous manner? The wise, the sensible, the honourable, part of society? No; they honour, they applaud, they love him. They are the abandoned, the shameless sensualists; the intemperate men of the world, devoted to all sinful pleasure, that treat virtue with contempt, because they are ignorant of its nature and its enjoyments. Is the esteem of such persons an object of importance to a virtuous mind? Is the loss of it a sacrifice? No; it is rather a gain, a rich and honourable gain. Our Lord's exclamation "Woe

unto you when all men speak well of you" will be well understood and justly felt in such a case. And if there be one spark of virtuous independence in his bosom, the sarcasms of a wicked world will be felt as his glory, and the testimonies of his conscience to his virtue, as his present and everlasting treasure.

But I proceed to observe, that virtue has not only no sacrifices to make, but is the surest means of obtaining all the objects of pursuit which even worldly wisdom itself can deem valuable,—competence and even riches, and with them the best pleasures of life, in all their variety; fame too, and distinction. I say, virtue generally obtains all these; and when she has obtained them she enjoys them: whereas vice, if it should obtain, cannot enjoy. Wealth, in the hands of a wicked man, is either obtained by vice or is employed as the instrument of vice; and the pleasures it yields are embittered by the remonstrances of reason and the reproaches of conscience. They are generally, too, carried to an excess which cloys the appetite for pleasure, and

they are thus rendered transient. But this is their lightest evil. These excesses enervate both body and mind, and entail misery, and in very many cases excruciating and lasting miseries. Now, virtue guards the possession of worldly means from all these excesses and from their consequent inflictions, and never fails to direct them so as to become the salutary and the perpetual sources of satisfactory and useful pleasure. It may be safely affirmed, that no one enjoys the bounties of this life, the pleasures of the world in their true perfection and to their proper extent, but the man of virtue.

I mentioned fame as the main object of pursuit with some individuals; and I again repeat, that virtue is the only means of obtaining this much-desired worldly blessing. No man can be indifferent respecting the estimation in which he is held during his continuance in life, or after his removal by death. It is very natural, and it is a proper desire with men, that their memories may be held dear after their departure. But can virtuous reputation be obtained by vicious ac-

tions? No, truly. Though it has been the eager wish of numbers to purchase fame, as if it were a saleable article, in order to blot out the too apparent blemishes of their lives; yet experience and time have exposed their infamy, and rendered their characters shamefully, instead of honourably, notorious. But substantial services to the world, and to the cause and church of God,—the widow's blessing, the orphan's grateful tears, the poor man's humble thanks, the virtuous man's commendation,—are the well known and real accompaniment of honourable and deserved reputation. And this reputation (the highest which a rational being can wish for on this side the grave) shall be yours; but only by virtuous exertions, and the practice of generous goodness. In the bosom of your families, in the enjoyment of your homes, in the society of your friends, and in the applause of the world you shall rejoice, and no man can take away that joy from you. Yes, and even death, which takes most of our mortal possessions away, will not cut off the deserved honours of virtue. Your children when they speak your names will call them bless-

ed, and their virtuous and happy lives will be the noblest and most lasting monument that can be erected to your honoured memories.

I observe again, that peace and comfort are sought by many as the greatest blessings of life —to pass easily through the world without enduring much of its evils. I have already shown that vice tends to render the mind constantly unsettled. And in the former part of this discourse I endeavoured to show that the mind is never tranquil, but when its powers perform all their natural functions and are guided by virtue. It would be needless, therefore, to show that malice, anger, revenge, lust, and pride, render the mind uneasy, and that the absence of these bad passions restores it to peace. There is, however, one satisfaction which creates the most blissful peace in the virtuous breast, which I must not omit to notice; and if my time permitted, it would give me pleasure to dwell upon it,—I mean the satisfaction of an enlightened and good conscience. I trust I am speaking to many who have felt those

serene delights which are inspired by this invaluable friend, those delights, that blissful peace, "which passeth all understanding." When you have been weighed down with the cares and troubles of the world, and your duty became a burthen, this secret monitor has whispered, "Well done!" and I am sure the grateful sound has diffused a serenity, a peace which has tranquillized the mind, and made it equal to every difficulty, and made every duty easy. In life many uncertainties and doubts occur, and much anxious care concerning our future career; yet he who has the approbation of this inward monitor —who hears this voice of God suggesting that all is right, rests assured he is safe, his feet will not slide, his path is smooth before him.

In this discourse I have purposely confined my observation respecting the advantages of virtue to what concerns this life; but you well know to what prodigious amount these advantages would instantly swell, if we begin to connect this life with another, with that future life which the

revelation of the Gospel has brought to our view, that all-interesting state of complete moral retribution. But this for the present I must leave to your own serious consideration.

The fancied pleasures of vice soon fade away, they pall upon the taste; and as years advance they will be changed into sorrow and absolute hatred: but a good conscience, the result of a virtuous life, continues to afford peaceful and exalted joy to the end. So far from ceasing to yield delight, it improves by age; and the more frequent its approvals, the greater and the more full the bliss which it imparts.

I have just suggested the vast accumulation of the motives to virtue arising from the connexion of this life with a future; and I shall conclude this discourse by urging the very great uncertainty of human life, as a motive for earnestness and zeal in the practice of virtue. A very recent and most melancholy event adds feeling to the conviction that not a moment ought to be

lost, even by the youngest of us, in order to prepare ourselves for our final home. You have no doubt anticipated my reference to the very deeply lamented death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales and that of her infant son*.

To her the attention and pleasing hopes of the nation have been naturally directed for many years. Her excellent dispositions endeared her to Britons, and gave them the most flattering promises of future, though distant, good to the nation. These hopes, alas! are now entirely blighted by the deplored death of this amiable Princess: and for reasons inscrutable by us, but certainly most wise and benevolent, it has been ordained that her infant offspring should fall (as we view things) an untimely sacrifice to the king of terrors. So unexpected and so awful an event has, no doubt, struck a panic through the kingdom. But let it be recollected that we are

* This melancholy news arrived at Warrington on Saturday morning, and was communicated to the author of this discourse while he was composing it, and made a very deep impression upon his mind.

Christians, and have the most substantial grounds for trusting in the living God. He is the actual ruler and governor of all nations, the King of kings and Lord of lords. The measures and events of all nations are under his controul. And believing that he is infinitely wise in all his measures and perfectly good in all his purposes, we have reasons for the most consoling confidence under every event of his government. At the same time we cannot fail to sympathize in the sorrows thus excited. And finally, my fellow-Christians, may this awful event be so wisely improved by us, that, knowing that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, we may seize hold of the present moment, experience the wisdom and blessedness of virtue, and be prepared to obey the summons of death, whenever it may arrive, as a passport to a better land, where sickness, and sorrow, and affliction, and pain, and crying, and mourning shall be done away, and glory from the eternal throne shall fill everlasting ages. God grant it. Amen *.

* Within six hours after the pious author had written this affecting peroration, he himself was very suddenly and unex-

peetedly removed out of this world. He had finished his composition at midnight, and read over the last paragraph to a friend who was with him; after which he retired to rest in his usual health and spirits, to rise no more till that day when all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE INTERMENT

OF

THE REV. THOMAS BIGGIN BROADBENT, A.M.

BY

J. G. ROBBERDS.

TO

THE DEAREST FRIENDS

OF THE DEPARTED

THIS ADDRESS IS INSCRIBED

IN TESTIMONY OF

A SINCERE AND AFFECTIONATE

SYMPATHY.

ADDRESS.

[*The Portions of Scripture read, were* PSALM CXXI. *and parts of* 1 COR. XV.]

IF I stood here in the character of a comforter, I should not dare to add any thing to the words which I have just read; particularly as I am speaking in the presence of one who is well instructed in the consolations of the Gospel, and who knows how cold and shadowy are all other forms of comfort. I could say nothing which would not remind him how vainly at all times has the voice of man's wisdom been raised, and all the variety of man's imagination been employed, to deceive the heart into forgetfulness of a present and real sorrow. He would remember that one of the greatest masters in eloquence, one who knew all that heathen philosophy could teach, could find no argument to check his own tears, no hope to soothe his own affliction. But

where the Roman father could only weep, the Christian father, though he too may weep, can promise himself a time when his mourning shall be turned into joy.

But though I have too much respect for the source whence I know that he looks, and trust that he looks not in vain, for comfort, to intrude upon him the language of any other consolation than that which from that source already speaks to him—I may be permitted to add a few words, as one who shares with many others an unfeigned and deep regret for the untimely loss which we have sustained.

He, perhaps, who is the most severely visited in this mysterious event, may forbid me to call that untimely, which could not have happened but by the wise appointment of a Being who alone can judge of times and seasons. I bow with awed and unquestioning submission to the will of that Almighty Being. But I trust He will pardon his weak and ignorant creature in the words which he may speak after man's apprehension.

It cannot but appear to me an untimely event, which makes the parent a mourner for his child, and which gives to the grave the harvest of all those seeds that he had sown with so much care, and that he had already seen springing up with so abundant a promise.

But it is not his hope alone which this event has disappointed. It is not only the evening of his day which this cloud has darkened. The gloom has spread also over those expectations, which by many others had been formed, and reasonably formed, of one whose valuable attainments, excellent character, and mental energy, seemed the earnest of great and extensive usefulness in the profession which he had chosen. Standing where I do, I cannot doubt that I am speaking to many, upon whom the impression made by his public services, unconnected with the partialities of friendship, would compel them to lament this early loss of one who could feel all the importance of the truths which it was his office to maintain, and who could no less impressively recommend them to the hearts of others.

Theirs is a regret which I can fully share; and the blight which has thus suddenly fallen upon our common expectations, every natural feeling prompts me to call untimely.

But when I consider the many wounds which this awful event has inflicted in the hearts of his private friends; when I think how widely the blow has reached in the circle of his early associates, to whom his cheerful and generous temper justly endeared him; and more than all, when I think of those prospects nearest to his heart, from which he has been torn;—when I contemplate all the effects of his loss—a just expectation of usefulness disappointed—so many pleasing ties abruptly broken—a father's hope dashed to the dust—fair visions of domestic happiness destroyed;—what should prevent me from calling his death, oh! most untimely!

And can it be wrong, if, when with these feelings we look to him, who of all here has the greatest right to grieve, we are more ready to offer him our tears than to speak of consolation!

Forgive us, O thou wise and gracious Father! if in such feelings there be any thing injurious to thy character or government.

—Yet is there one recollection which claims to be heard amid these many voices of sorrow, and which reminds us how much greater must have been our sorrow, if he who appears to have fallen so untimely, had also fallen unprepared. But this sorrow, we trust, we have been spared. Sudden, but not we may hope terrible, was death, to a mind which must often have contemplated its approach, and whose latest energies were employed in meditating on those hopes, which enable the Christian to disarm it of its terrors. Every reflection, every feeling, that makes his death lamented by us, is an inward whisperer, that it needed not be dreaded by him. The change has been awful to us; but we may hope and believe it has been glorious and happy to him.

Here begins the victory of our faith. Here terminates the weakness of our reason. Here

breaks in upon our gloom, the dawn of another and a brighter day.

Here also is heard the voice of heavenly wisdom, crying unto us, "Watch, for ye know not in what hour your Lord cometh. Be ye also ready, that when he cometh, ye also may enter into his joy."

Let us strengthen these awakened hopes; let us strengthen their holy and soothing influence, by fervent application to Him who inspires them. Let us bow ourselves before God; let us remember and implore the mercy of our Almighty Helper. Let us pour out our sorrows and our prayers before our heavenly and ever gracious Father.

Printed by R. and A. Taylor, Shoe Lane, London.

The Tendency of the Human Condition to Improvement and its Ultimate Perfection in Heaven.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

Unitarian Church, Hackney,

On Sunday Morning, February, 18, 1816,

ON OCCASION

OF THE

LAMENTED DEATH

OF

Mr. JAMES HENNELL.

By ROBERT ASPLAND,

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH.

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Preface.

Mr. James Hennell died on Tuesday, January 30, 1816, after a slow consumptive disease of many months, and was interred in his family grave in the burial-ground belonging to the New Gravel-Pit Meeting-House, Hackney. The Rev. Dr. Lindsay officiated at the interment, the author being absent from home on the melancholy duty of attending the sick and dying bed and afterwards the grave of an only surviving parent.* The following Sermon was preached on the first Sunday after the Author's return; it is now published at the request of the family of the deceased; and the following short address with which the discourse was introduced from the pulpit will explain the reason of the wish of Mr. Hennell's surviving friends to have it in their hands and of the author's compliance.

* Mrs Hannah Aspland (relict of the late Mr. Robert Aspland) who died at Wicken, in the County of Cambridge, February 3, 1816, aged 64 years.

"It is scarcely unknown to a single member of this congregation that since I have been called away from this place, death has removed the head of one of our most numerous families in the vigour of his years. It is agreeable to the custom of our churches that such an event should give a direction to the thoughts suggested from the pulpit on this occasion. But I frankly confess that shaken as I myself have lately been as a mourner in the chamber of death, I dare not trust my own feelings or agitate yours by a subject immediately funereal. I have tried my strength and proved my weakness by attempting several topics that appeared not unsuitable.

"Without venturing upon new ground, therefore, I have resolved, in reliance upon the divine blessing and your candour, to select for your hearing a discourse which I delivered to you on this day twelve months; led to this choice by the recollection that the sermon was partly composed in reference to some conversation with our deceased friend, that by his desire it was put into his hands after its delivery, and that the subject of it was the theme of his discourse in some of the last interviews with him with which Providence indulged me."

A

SERMON, &c.

1 Cor. xiii. 8——12.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

THE apostle here indulges those lofty speculations concerning the progressive improvement and ultimate perfection of mankind, which have always been the employment, the distinction and the solace of superior minds, and which are in a peculiar manner raised and sustained by the Christian Re-

velation. He is transported to the delightful theme, by the contemplation of charity, the principle and sentiment of universal benevolence; carried onward by the comparison which he had instituted between moral qualities and miraculous powers, of which these latter are temporary, whereas the former will survive all changes and endure for ever, and also perhaps by the secret reflection that it is not in this life that virtue and especially charity will be perfected; it has its beginning here, but its consummation will take place only in heaven.

"Charity never faileth," will never expire or languish. Its many excellent properties, had been described, as they contribute to the happiness of the present state, and it is added that it possesses the further excellence and glory of perpetuity, unlike all other possessions and gifts which fade in the using.

"But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Knowledge, prophecies and tongues were supernatural gifts enjoyed by the primitive church; tongues were the most splendid endowment and accordingly most coveted, although knowledge and prophecies were most commended on account of their use by the apostle. But they were none of them designed to be perpetual. Much as it would surprise and displease the eager competitors for miraculous powers, Paul frankly reveals to

them that when the Christian scheme should be fully published to the world and firmly established, these helps would be taken away; or at farthest that they would have no place in that glorious state to which all religion, all virtue points, where there shall be no need for one to say to his neighbour, "know the Lord, for all shall know him from the greatest to the least."—With a mind equally enlightened and courageous the apostle hurries forward beyond the present scheme even of divine revelation, and rising above forms and ceremonies sees and magnifies the weightier matters of the law and the gospel, the eternal principles of truth and love. Few probably of the early Christians were prepared to take so high a flight; many we know misinterpreted and censured the aspirings of the apostle of the Gentiles; but he would not suffer this consideration to weigh him down to the beggarly elements of religion, sensible signs, "meats and drinks and carnal ordinances." What better proof can we have of his superior mind; of his capacity to judge of the evidences as well as of the nature of Christianity! What a title does this give him to our confidence as a Christian expositor and instructor! And how far does it raise him above the low character of a fanatic, and the gross and base one of an impostor, either of whom would have magnified and extolled the system which he was rearing, and have sought to secure the faith and trust of his disciples by predicting that the forms then set up would be eternal!

"For," adds the apostle, "we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." The best gifts on earth, and even miraculous, gifts were imperfect; in proportion as they answered their end, they would be withdrawn; in heaven would be no place for them, for there all will be perfect. Not that any real knowledge will be lost for ever to intelligent beings; but that the modes and forms of knowledge will be changed, and that the outward covering of truth will be laid aside when men are prepared to apprehend its immutable substance.

The apostle illustrates the progression of the human mind in religion, by the growth of the human being from infancy to manhood. "When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought" or reasoned "as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Like our Lord, the apostle seems fond of recurring to the interesting state of childhood for similes and analogies, delighted to retrace the happy period of human existence when all is innocence, novelty, hope and gaiety. Neither he nor his great Master looked upon our nature under the blighting influence of system. In childhood they saw not sin, but only imperfection,—the same kind of imperfection that exists in Christians in the present state, which the dispensations of Providence will gradually remove, and which will finally be done away.

By another simile, the apostle represents the same pleasing truth. "For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then, face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known." To explain this simile, it may be necessary to observe that amongst the ancients, *glass* was not brought to that perfection in which we have it at present; objects seen through it, were not seen very distinctly. It is not even certain that so clear a thing as *glass* was intended by the apostle; the original word may denote only the thin plates of *horn* or even of transparent *stone*, which were in former times made use of, to admit light and to exclude air.* The meaning of the passage is, that in the present state our sight of spiritual things is dim and partial, but that hereafter all obstructions will be taken away, and we shall see objects clearly and at hand; our knowledge resembling in some measure that of the Divine mind, before which all things are naked and open.

Having endeavoured to explain and illustrate this beautiful passage of holy writ, we shall proceed to consider briefly the animating doctrine which it contains of the *Tendency of the Human Condition to Improvement and its ultimate Perfection in Heaven.* The subject itself, as suggested by the text, implies that on the latter part of it our ideas must at present be obscure; but though

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* See Pearce in loc.

we cannot see clearly and fully into the other world, we may obtain a glimpse of it, and the experience of Christians in all ages testifies that the contemplation of the future state, even through the dull medium of time and sense, is of unspeakable use in raising our minds, in bettering our characters, in alleviating the sufferings of mortality, and in filling us with peace and joy in believing. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, let us draw near, with a true heart, with full assurance of faith."*

I. *The Tendency of the human condition to Improvement* would be a natural conclusion from the perfections of our Creator, if we were not able from our observation and experience, as well as from the testimony of history, to consider it as a matter of *fact*.

The apostle has already suggested to us the analogy between the natural history of man and the progress of his mind. How vast is the difference between the babe just born, and the human being in the maturity of his bodily powers! Yet we confidently reckon that the infant, if not hindered by accident or disease, will, generally speaking, attain to the strength and size of the parent. Arrived at

* Heb. x. 20—22.

that pitch, the human body stops; but stops only because it has reached the point at which it most effectually answers the purposes of life. Further growth would not be an improvement but an inconvenience. Let but the mind receive an analogous increase, and it is evident that it must be for ever growing, because it is not conceivable that it should ever attain to a point of perfection beyond which it could not proceed, or not without injury.

Analogies are not arguments, but they may suggest them. We may safely judge of the Creator by his works, and infer what he will do from what he has done. If we perceive, in that part of nature which is subjected to our examination, no power without its use and no tendency but to a beneficial end and an end sufficiently secured, it is surely allowed us to conclude that it is in the design of our Maker to give the human mind full scope, and to gratify the desires which he himself has excited. Considered as an animal merely, there seems to be no reason why man should have a second existence; the senses attain their limit of perfection and their sum of enjoyment in the present life and almost in the earlier stages of it; and it is not easy to conceive how sensible properties should attain to any state but this, and particularly how they should be restored, in their identity, after the dissolution of the human frame and the absolute destruction of all the bodily organs: but considered as an intelligent Being,

another life appears necessary to account for his constitution and his powers. No one can look at the human body and not acknowledge exquisite wisdom in its contrivance and great benevolence in its design; now there will not, it may be apprehended, appear less wisdom and goodness in the structure of the mind; but if time be all our portion, and there be no eternity for us, there has been a want of calculation in the adjustment of our intellectual faculties to our narrow term of being, and also a striking defect in the provision for our happiness. On this supposition man has a superfluity of mental powers. He cannot exercise them all, to the full, before he is overwhelmed by death. In some cases, the mind is too mighty for the body, and oppresses it to disorder and premature decay. It cannot be pleaded that sensible enjoyments are in proportion to the faculties of the mind: a very limited degree of understanding suffices for the relish and even the procurement of the pleasures of the senses; whilst much thought is a bar to ease and indulgence; and the greatest minds have been commonly outdone by the meanest in the competition for merely worldly satisfactions. From hence it follows that a much less degree of intelligence would have sufficed for man considered only as a creature of Time, and would have been in reality better suited to his love of pleasure. This argues a defect of benevolence as well as wisdom, which also is

evident on the same hypothesis, from the melancholy fact that man's strongest desires are the most delusive, that he has been created indeed to pant for immortality but that the grave shall close upon him and his hopes together. Now, without appealing to revelation, is this state of things agreeable to the undeniable perfections of the Author of nature?

The nature of man, compared with the character of his Creator, concurs therefore, with the fondest wishes of his heart, in pointing to the improvement of the human condition, in a future state of being.

The same end may be considered as foreshadowed by the history of mankind, which amidst all the fluctuations and the frequent calamities of the species has proved from the earliest times an advance towards happiness, by means of knowledge and civilization. To this agreeable truth we have the testimony of an historian* who was not warped by any pious feelings to pronounce too favourably of Providence, and whose peculiar studies led him to consider chiefly the darkest ages of the world and the most depraved characters that have stained its annals. "The experience of 4,000 years" says he, "should enlarge our hopes and diminish our apprehensions: we cannot determine to what height the human species may aspire in their ap-

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Gibbon, Decl. and Fall.

proaches towards perfection; but it may be safely presumed that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism.—We may therefore acquiesce," he adds, "in the pleasing conclusion, that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the wealth, the happiness, the knowledge and perhaps the virtue of the human race."

Can this fact of the perpetual improvement of the world comport with the cessation and loss of every thing to the individual at death? Is there not a repugnance between the two suppositions? The higher man rises, the lower he may fall; and the perfection of human society would be very far from a blessing if it served to mark more strongly the humiliating end of all its members. This regular improvement, besides, cannot be ascribed to accident; it must be explained by a reference to a presiding wisdom, operating by means of second causes, one of the most powerful of those causes being (as all will allow) the hope of immortality inspired by religion; but how are we to explain the *wisdom* of a melioration of the human condition by means of a delusion, the melioration serving at the same time to make the removal of the delusion and the discovery of the truth the greatest possible of evils!

The progressive improvement of the world appears remarkably in the history of revealed religion and Christian truth. In the patriarchal age, the

Father of Light was pleased to communicate some faint glimmerings of religious knowledge, a sort of intellectual twilight, in which, according to the description of the prophet, it was "neither clear nor dark, neither day nor night." Under the Mosaic economy, the beams of truth flowed with a clearer and a stronger current, gradually diffusing themselves and increasing in splendour, until the full appearance of the Sun of Rightcousness, whose glory, perpetually augmenting, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Grant that the light of the gospel has been sometimes obscured, that there have been ages of almost universal darkness, since the first establishment of Christianity, and allow further that this is a part of the scheme of Divine Providence which we know not how to explain; but admit at the same time that the period that has intervened from the time of our Lord may be but short, compared with the ages of light and truth that are to follow even upon earth, and also that never since the world began were mankind in a condition so well prepared and disposed as at the present moment for truth and virtue, by the general spread of knowledge and the means of knowledge, and above all by the growing conquests of religious liberty over persecution and intolerance and even bigotry; and it may be proved that upon the whole there has been a gradual though slow advance in the progress of the religion of that simplest, but most

neglected, most abused of books, the New Testament. Delightful persuasion! a powerful motive to our claiming the high honour of taking part in every scheme of Christian reformation, and above all to our looking forward to the world to come, where alone there will be improvement without danger, the improvement of the whole of society by the improvement of every individual, and where only truth will prevail without error, zeal will never die away and *charity will never fail.*

II. *The ultimate Perfection of the human Condition in Heaven*, it is almost equally difficult—to *describe and not to believe.*

We know not what we shall be; with what bodies we shall be raised; in what place we shall be stationed; what will constitute proper identity; how we shall communicate with each other and with other beings; of what kind will be our employments; under what form of law we shall act; to what extent will be our reponsibility; how far we shall be subject to change; by what means we shall take in pleasures; in what respects we shall be united to Jesus Christ; and by what acts we shall glorify God.

But notwithstanding this ignorance, we learn enough of heaven from our apostle in the text and from the other scriptures to enkindle our most ardent hopes;—by them we are instructed that it will be a state of perfect *Knowledge* and of pure *Love.*

1st. A state of perfect *Knowledge.* "For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known."

Little as we can at present understand of the mode of our future being, all our inquiries and reasonings lead us to expect that our nature, when renewed at the resurrection, will be favourable, in a degree that surpasses imagination, to the acquisition of knowledge and the comprehension of truth. This conclusion is fully warranted by the Scriptures, which represent that a great change will pass upon us, for even those that are living at the coming of the Lord from heaven will be instantaneously changed, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but that this corruptible will put on incorruption, and that as we have borne the image of the first Adam, our natural progenitor, who was of the earth, earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the second Adam, our religious and immortal head, who is the Lord, to come from heaven, a quickening spirit. Our nature is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself. We know that we shall be like

him, for we shall see him as he is. He is gone to prepare a place for us and will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may also be ; so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Now put together these images and ideas, of a change, of a deliverance from gross matter, of spirituality, of incorruptibility, of power and glory, of a likeness to Jesus Christ and of eternal communion with him, and you have as strong a representation as can be made of the future improvement and perfection of our intellectual powers.

The sense of *sight* is the most refined of all the senses and that by which we receive the greatest number of ideas ; and this is one of the figures by which the acts and exercises of our minds hereafter are pictured. "Now we see, through a glass, darkly; but then face to face. We shall be like Christ, for we shall see him as he is." And it is the beatitude of *the pure in heart* that *they shall see God.* The sense of these places evidently is that in the other world our powers of discernment will be increased, our perceptions will be quick and clear, our capacity of knowledge will be enlarged and our means of knowledge multiplied.

Reflect then what you will be, no longer subject to bodily appetites, your understandings no more weakened and obscured by the infirmities and disorders of flesh and blood, your hearts never clouded with apprehension or oppressed with sorrow, your being not wasted upon little cares nor half absorb-

ed in sleep, no changes to be interpreted as the signals of a final and total change, no beds of languishing, no weariness, no decay; reflect also with whom you will be associated, with Him, who spake on earth as never man spake, who was in the bosom of the Father and hath revealed and will eternally reveal treasures of heavenly knowledge, who henceforth will call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth, but will call you friends, for all things that he heareth of the Father, he will make known unto you; further, reflect that all the truly wise will be your companions, that the wide creation will be laid open to your view in all its glory, and that eternity will be your one unchanging, unclouded day,—and you will understand in what sense you are created in *the image of God*, and will believe, "as it is written eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, to be revealed unto us by the spirit, which searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

2ndly. A state of pure *Love. Charity never faileth.*

The change which our nature has to undergo, when *He that sitteth upon the throne* shall *make all things new*, will be as favourable to the benevolent affections as to the intellectual powers. The hindrances to knowledge are also the common occasions of ill-will, strife and confusion. Even in the

present imperfect state of society, *a sound mind* is nearly the same as *an honest and good heart.* Whatever refines our nature, softens it at the same time. Our Lord, with equal truth and beauty, uses the figure of *a clear eye* for a pure and benevolent heart, *an evil eye* for a heart darkened and polluted by envy and other unkind affections. Remove the incitements of appetite, let the heats of flesh and blood be allayed, compose jarring interests and root out selfish feelings, and nothing will remain but benevolence, the kind wish that extends to every being capable of good, the love of whatsoever is lovely. When this glorious change is accomplished and *all that offends* is completely and eternally eradicated, there will be no possibility of the existence of any but good affections and generous desires, prompting to the admiration of all excellence and the sweet offices of pure and equal friendship.

The images by which our Lord and the apostles describe a future world, present the idea of a social state, and of society the more close and intimate, from the removal of all that is gross and heavy in human nature. The present relations of one being to another cannot there subsist, but the recollection of all our present ties must ever remain, and the associations of ideas that we hereby form must still continue in some degree to form and influence our habits of thought. Our knowledge of each other will be the necessary result of our rising the same

conscious beings that we lie down in death, and will, doubtless, be hereafter, as now, the source of our purest and highest happiness, although our affections will not then be limited by our want of knowledge or impeded by our consequent jealousies and suspicions. We shall love no one the less for loving more of our fellow creatures. Nay, our attachment to individuals will be unspeakably increased by the removal of those imperfections which are now so great an alloy to the purest friendships: whilst, at the same time, the connexions of family and friendship and country, under the auspices of which we shall commence our second being, will be no more than the first lines of an ever-growing circle of charity. Even the *leaves of the tree* of life will be *for the healing of the nations;* the food of immortality will be the aliment of love. The "pure river of the water of of life," clear "as chrystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb," will be a flowing stream of peace and pleasure and fulness of joy. The morning will have broken that shall introduce day without night; "the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it," in sweet counsel and communion; they shall "walk with Jesus in white," in festival robes, the garments of salvation, for they will then be *worthy*; and consecrating their immortal friendships by heavenly piety, the united, joyful *kindreds* shall bring in their glory and honour, "golden vials full of

odours, which are the prayers of the saints, singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb," in praise of Him, " who alone hath" and giveth " immortality, the Lord God Almighty."

Glorious day! Happy state! when we shall be near and like the Best of Beings, our unchangeable Father, " awaking satisfied in his likeness ;" when we shall behold him, who though highly-exalted by his God and our God, his Father and our Father, " is not ashamed to call us brethren," " whom not having seen we love and in whom though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory ;" when we shall be united to all the excellent of the earth, all who were honoured in their generation and whose names excite our gratitude and love ; when we shall be contemporaries with good men of all ages and places ; and more than this, when we shall again greet lost companions and friends and endeared relatives, when we shall hail revered parents, welcome beloved children, and embrace each other who have been the most tenderly connected ; when we shall meet without frailty, anxiety or fear, our intercourse never clouded by distrust, our sentiments never liable to be mistaken, our actions to be misinterpreted ; when no cold thought of the morrow shall chill the present generous emotions of the heart ; when no unbidden tear shall start, as we survey each other, in recollection of the past

or apprehension of the future, as we trace the ravages of time or see the warning of the ravages of death ; when we shall no more sigh over dangers which we cannot avert, no more hang over the couch of disease, no more *feel* those *farewells* that cannot be uttered, no more abandon ourselves to despair ; when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes."

These animating prospects supported and cheered our departed brother Mr. James Hennell. He had enjoyed the unspeakable advantage of a religious education and had acquired in early life that habit of soul which may be called the *religious sense.* A favorite topic of his conversation in his last days was, his obligations, never to be sufficiently acknowledged, to pious parental counsel and example. After apostolic example, he reasoned upon his faith as a Christian, and reasoned well ; but what is of more consequence, he felt deeply and felt correctly. In his varied and complicated transactions with the world he might err through the uncertainty of every thing human, but I am firmly persuaded he never erred from design. His, as he assured me, was on a death-bed, the testimony of a good conscience ; yet he was conscious of imperfections and frailties and with

sincere repentance he reposed on the mercy of his heavenly Father.

It pleased the Sovereign Disposer of Life to lay him long on the bed of languishing. All hope of recovery had left him for months before his departure, during all which time he knew he had nothing to do but to die. But the prospect of certain death at so untimely an age, when in the course of nature he might have calculated on many years to come, and the thought of leaving in the world a large family to whom he was tenderly attached, never terrified or agitated him; for himself, he knew in whom he had believed and that he was able to keep that which he had committed to him, his eternal interest, against the last day, and, for his children, he could trust with confidence to the Father of the fatherless. Seldom has a death-bed been so calm, so cheerful, so instructive, I may even add so animating, as his. As he had done with the world, so, in his own language, he appeared to have risen above it. His conversation was in heaven. The greatest efforts of his sinking nature were put forth in exercises of parental duty and of piety. Whilst his strength lasted he was accustomed to lead the worship of his family, and his voice was often heard in the psalms that were sung upon these occasions with a fulness and vigour that bespoke the earnestness

and the joy of his soul. Almost daily he assembled his children around him and gave them his counsels and his blessing. Soon after one of these edifying, exemplary exercises, the springs of life began to appear exhausted and he gently fell asleep, dying in the Lord, resting from his labours and awaiting that glorious day when them that sleep in Jesus God will bring with Him. The Lord grant that he may find the promised mercy of the Lord in that day; that his friends and children may according to his fervent prayers live the life and die the death of the righteous, precious in the sight of Heaven; and that we all may so pass the time of our sojourning upon earth as to enjoy a peaceful end and to rise in the resurrection of the just, companions of all them that through faith and patience inherit the promises. *Amen* and *Amen*.

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THE
FUTURE ACCESSION OF GOOD MEN OF ALL CLIMES TO CHRISTIANITY, AND THEIR FINAL CONGREGATION IN HEAVEN.

A SERMON,

ON OCCASION OF THE LAMENTED DEATH

OF THE

RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY,

PREACHED AT THE

NEW GRAVEL-PIT MEETING,

HACKNEY,

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1833,

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THIS DISTINGUISHED ORIENTAL REFORMER.

BY ROBERT ASPLAND.

> One man except, the only son of Light,
> In a dark age, against example good,
> Against allurement, custom, and a world
> Offended. *Milton.*

LONDON:
ROWLAND HUNTER, 72, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

1833.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Author had not intended to print the following Discourse. He considered the Sermon preached upon the occasion by his respected friend Dr. Carpenter, of Bristol, to be the proper funereal tribute to the memory of the Rajah; and this he hoped, and still hopes, to see published, especially as Dr. Carpenter was in frequent intercourse with the illustrious deceased, during his last days, and enjoyed, besides, peculiar opportunities of acquiring an exact knowledge of his life and opinions.

But an edition of the Sermon having made its appearance, (printed, it is supposed, from notes taken at the time of delivery,) without the sanction of the Author, no alternative is left to him, unless he could consent to bear the imputation of putting out a mean and illiterate publication, in reference to a name entitled to every outward mark of respect.

It is to be hoped that this dishonourable practice will not become common. The actors in this instance are admonished that their conduct is as illegal as it is unjust.

A SERMON.

JUDGING that it would not be uncongenial with the feelings of the congregation, nor presumptuous on my part, nor, perhaps, wholly unserviceable to the cause of Christian truth, I ventured last Sunday morning to announce that I should adapt the present discourse to the melancholy event of the somewhat sudden and, according to the course of nature, premature decease of our distinguished Oriental visiter, Rajah Rammohun Roy; the rather, as he was an occasional worshiper in this House of Prayer, and repeatedly expressed that he felt a deep interest in this congregation. On that occasion, I stated that I did not meditate a mere eulogy upon the departed Brahmin. My object is to represent him as, with my means of knowledge, I consider him to have been, and to describe his religious character and profession as it appeared to myself, and to others that had still better means of forming a

correct opinion. His condition in relation to Christianity was so peculiar; his rank and acquirements and labours justly attracted to him so much public attention; and so many contradictory statements have been made of his religious views, that it cannot be regarded as an indelicate or uninteresting inquiry, whether he embraced the gospel entirely and unreservedly, and what was his decision amidst the conflicting theories of Christian sects upon the true scheme of doctrine propounded in the Christian Scriptures. My answer to this inquiry will be anticipated from the words which I shall now read as a text,—the groundwork of some observations not, I trust, foreign from the subject. You will find the words in

MATTHEW VIII. 11:

AND I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT MANY SHALL COME FROM THE EAST AND WEST, AND SHALL SIT DOWN WITH ABRAHAM, AND ISAAC, AND JACOB, IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

The speaker is our Lord. He was now acting in his great and delightful character of a Comforter and a Saviour, and his gracious prediction was uttered upon the contemplation of an extraordinary degree of faith and piety in one from whom they might have been least expected, a Roman centurion or captain, who improved the opportunity of his military employment in the Holy Land to inquire after true religion, and whose inquiry terminated in his abandonment of the ido-

latry of his fathers and his adoption of the pure Jewish worship. A sincere proselyte, he appears to have studied the sacred books of the peculiar people, and to have learned from them the character of the long-predicted and now fondly-expected Messiah. The fame of Jesus aroused his attention. He probably witnessed some of our Lord's miracles of mercy, and heard some of his discourses full of heavenly wisdom. He was impressed with reverence and believed in the Son of God. The occasion of the sickness of a favourite servant, which was expected to be mortal, led him to testify these sentiments by outward acts, as compassionate as they were pious. He made application to Jesus to come to his house and heal his servant, but modestly preferred the momentous request through the elders of the Jews, who, according to the narrative in St. Luke's gospel, besought urgently the interference of the Prophet mighty in word and deed, alleging that the Roman was worthy of this deed of Divine beneficence, being a lover of their nation and having built them a synagogue. This plea, founded on the liberality, the generosity and the piety of the centurion prevailed, and Jesus accompanied the elders. As he was approaching the house of sickness, the mind of the humble Roman was alarmed lest he had been guilty of presumption in asking the Prophet of Israel to come under a Gentile roof. He therefore sent other friends to Jesus, representing that as he had not thought him-

self worthy to make his suit in person, so neither was he worthy that one so exalted should come into his house. Would Jesus but say the word, and his servant should be healed,—for, in like manner, as he, being in command, sent his soldiers and servants hither and thither at his pleasure, so the Messiah had, by divine appointment, diseases and even death in his power and under his controul, and could send them away by a word or a wish. Jesus presently exemplified the truth of the centurion's conception of his prophetic character and power, by healing the servant; but before he commanded the miracle, he expressed his admiration of such true knowledge and unbounded faith, saying to the people that were around, "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Ver. 10.) "And" (in the words of our text) "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Our Lord here evidently pronounced that the virtuous and pious centurion should sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, whatever be the meaning of the promise, and that many like him, from different and opposite climes, would by the same faith and virtue obtain the same privilege.

The phrase "kingdom of heaven," of frequent occurrence in the gospels, generally signifies the reign of God over men's minds and hearts in this

world by the truths which He has been pleased to reveal by Christ. A future state of blessedness is, however, implied in the phrase, if it be not in this and other places expressly denoted by it; for the dispensation of the gospel is the means to an end, that end being the promised happiness of the place and state which we call heaven. There, the patriarchs are represented as sitting, or rather, reclining, after the Eastern manner, as at a royal banquet; and there, it is predicted and promised by him who hath the keys of the celestial mansions, that wise and good men, like the Roman centurion, from all lands and all the varying dispensations of truth and grace, shall sit down, or, be equally honoured guests, with these fathers of the human race, the early examples on record of faith and piety. The language is figurative, but the undisputed sense of it is, that the faithful servants of God, and the true benefactors to their fellow-creatures, wherever and in whatever age they may have been born, and in whatever way they may have been trained to truth and goodness, shall be finally united in the enjoyment of a degree of moral perfection and of social bliss, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

Such is the promise, at once solemn and gracious, of Him who hath declared that heaven and earth

may pass away, but his word shall not pass away. Let us further meditate upon its high import, as connected with, and explained by, this beautiful part of the evangelical history, that we may be comforted in our sorrows, sustained in our infirmities, quickened in our best hopes, enlarged in every charitable feeling, and animated to persevering and increasing exertions for promoting the supreme glory of God most High, the true honour of Jesus Christ as the Sent of God, and the good of mankind, God's children, and brethren both of Christ and of one another!

Observe, in the first place, our Lord's entire confidence in the future and final state of his church. He was now but in the commencement of his heavenly ministry. He had comparatively few followers. He knew the jealousy and ill-will of the Jewish authorities with regard to his name and claims. He foresaw clearly, for he foretold distinctly, that he should be given into the power of his enemies, be deserted by his friends, and be mocked, scourged and put to death on the cross, amidst the exulting acclamations of nearly a whole nation. He, notwithstanding, spoke with calm certainty of the perpetuity of his doctrine, of its continual diffusion, and of his successive triumphs in the character of Messiah. The event has proved that he was in the Divine counsels. Ages have rolled along, sweeping away with them unnumbered opinions and institutions, religions of wide extent

and mighty influence, and even whole powerful nations; but the religion of Jesus has outlived every shock and every change, and still rests upon immoveable foundations. As we lately attempted to shew more largely,* Time has had no other power over it than to remove the obstructions to its progress, and to cause the corruptions that had gathered upon it to crumble to ashes. Many, in fulfilment of our Lord's confident prediction, have come to take up their rest in it from the east and from the west; and the appearances of the world would seem to indicate that these are to be regarded only as first-fruits of the general harvest. Now, this duration and multiplication of the Christian faith is perfectly natural on the supposition of its truth, but on the contrary supposition is utterly inexplicable. Admit our Lord's divine mission, and the result is in agreement with all the laws of the human mind: deny this, and it remains to be explained how he should have delivered predictions in themselves, at the time of their delivery, altogether improbable, that they should have been successively fulfilling, and that the fulfilment seems to thicken as the scenes of the world are changing with greater rapidity; so that prophecy, in a course of completion, forms a constantly accumulating evidence on behalf of the truth of the gospel.

* The author refers to some sermons, recently preached to his congregation, designed to answer the question, "Whether the Evidence of Christianity be impaired by Time."

Observe, secondly, our Lord's generous intrepidity, in confronting the strongest prejudices of his countrymen, by representing that men of all nations would meet in his church on earth, and in the kingdom of heaven, on a perfect equality. The promise is in fact to the Gentiles, or all men not Jews, as the occasion of it and the phrases connected with it and many kindred passages of the gospels shew beyond question. The centurion was a Roman and had, of course, been an idolater, and he had witnessed so much national jealousy on the part of the Jews, and such an assumption of superiority to all other people, that he was actuated not only by an impression of our Lord's dignity, but also by a wish to save him from the reproaches of his countrymen, in the expressed desire that he would not condescend to step over a Gentile threshold. But he who really, as was said of him by the Scribe ironically, regarded not the persons of men, but taught the way of God in truth, was struck with such admiration of the various virtues of the Roman soldier, that he could not be prevented from extolling his faith above any that he had found in Israel, or from declaring that, whilst under the influence of pious feelings, he thought himself unworthy of having the Consolation of Israel within his doors, he was entitled to be on equal terms with the honoured patriarchs in the banquet of heavenly felicity. Nor, would this virtuous man of heathen extraction be singular in the enjoyment of the privilege; many from the east

and the west, from lands held to be profane, resembling him in the strength and courage and purity of his mind, and in his righteous character, though deemed now unworthy to sit down at the same table with the natives of the holy land, would be admitted to seats beside Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the feast of that kingdom into which no prejudice, nor any thing that divides or offends, can enter. This was heroic charity on the part of our Lord; and there is nothing more admirable in his wonderful history than his persevering endeavour to demolish the walls of partition between nations and sects, to bring into suspicion and disrepute the notions and habits that separate men into castes, and cause them to look upon another as civilly and ceremonially clean or unclean, and to collect into one the children of God, his children by wisdom, faith and virtue, who are scattered abroad throughout the whole earth. How difficult this mission of philanthropy was in its fulfilment, we may learn from the history of his favoured disciples, who were slow of heart to believe that the gifts and calling of God by Christ are without partiality. A special divine revelation, as you have seen in the chapter read for our morning lesson*, was necessary to embolden the apostle Peter to go into men of another nation, and to eat with them, even though he was assured by angelic testimony that their prayers and their alms had gone up in memorial before God. But no sooner had this heavenly

* Acts x.

message let in light upon his understanding, than his heart was set free, and he exclaimed in a rapture both of charity and of devotion, "Of a truth I perceive that in every nation," and, of course, in every form of religious worship, for nations were then distinguished by their altars, "he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."

Unwilling has even the Christian world been to receive, in all its extent, this gladdening and glorious doctrine. Christianity has been too much and too long regarded as a narrow and exclusive, instead of a comprehensive and uniting scheme; as a blessing to this or that sect, not a blessing, according to the early divine promise, to all the families of the earth. Its design, undoubtedly, is to abolish idolatry and gross superstition; but where these are removed, there is still great latitude for theological opinions and religious rites, and no party endued with the spirit of the gospel will forbid or condemn another for following not with them. Nay, great would be the disparagement and wrong to the religion of Jesus, to describe it as condemning, for the world to come, heathens who have not enjoyed the light of divine revelation, and have yet been pious and virtuous according to their knowledge. By their own law, declares the apostle Paul, will they be judged, and not by ours; and to their own master, he declares also, they stand or fall; and their master, in things pertaining to God, is no earthly and mortal creature.

St. Luke* represents our Lord as using the prediction and promise of the text on a second occasion, and its application in this connexion justifies, if I am not mistaken, the doctrine that Christianity is a pledge as well as means of salvation to the many. One that heard him teaching said unto him, "Are there few that be saved?" His answer is first a rebuke of curiosity,—curiosity, probably, tinged with secret bigotry, of which the inquirer may not have been conscious: He admonishes the inquisitive Israelite to strive for his own salvation in the season of Heaven's mercy, lest he should seek in vain to enter into heaven when once the door is shut. He next represents that all claims to the Divine favour, founded upon local and temporal privileges, will be of no avail to the workers of iniquity, who will weep and lament when they shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and they themselves thrust out. The reply thus far is adapted to the Jewish people; but now going beyond them and their narrow inclosure, our Lord, to illustrate the proverbial maxim which he frequently quoted in reference to Jews and Gentiles, viz. "That there are last which shall be first, and first which shall be last," declares, with a high fervour of charity, "And they shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit

* Luke xiii. 29.

down in the kingdom of God;"—the declaration involving the cheering doctrine, that all will be saved who are not workers of iniquity, who do not substitute profession for practice, who do not magnify ceremony in order to depreciate virtue, and who strive to enter in at that gate of righteousness which not God but man has made strait, and man has made strait by his selfishness and sloth and pride and intolerance.

As all righteous men will, according to my understanding in the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, be eternally saved, so I think it probable that there will be a more visible and salutary and delightful union between them upon earth, in proportion as knowledge spreads its healing influence. An uniformity in faith and worship is inconsistent with all that we know of the human mind. It is at war with the principle of creation. It is not only impracticable, but would never have been thought of, if bigotry had not stifled the charities of the human heart. Our religion stands not in a creed, or in ceremonies and forms, but in a piously disposed mind, an honest heart and a pure and upright life. Where these are found, there is Christianity in its life and spirit, and these may be found every where; and whenever the happy time shall arrive that Christians shall set these forth prominently and in all their simplicity, there will be a growing oneness of heart between them, unbelief will have lost its strongest objections, and many shall come from the

east and the west, and sit down with Christians in the kingdom of God.

May not this very thought be insinuated in the somewhat peculiar phraseology of our Lord in the text, that the wise and good who resemble the Roman Centurion in fearing the true God and working righteousness shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God? It is observable that in the parallel passage from St. Luke, the exclusion of unrighteous Jews from the kingdom of God is described as a severer punishment, because they would see there the patriarchs and the *prophets*. In the text, enlightened and pious Gentiles are to sit down, not with Moses and the prophets, but with the three patriarchs of the Hebrew nation. This is not an unmeaning difference. The patriarchs lived before the establishment of the law. They seem to have had no prescribed ceremonies, no ritual and few sacrifices. Their piety stood not in positive institutes, but in great moral and religious principles. Their faith was the fear of the One True God, their religion obedience to his known law. The Levitical institutes had their civil, political, personal and religious design, but they were local in their establishment, temporary in their use and peculiar to one people. When they have answered their end, they will be removed. Their end was answered when the Messiah came with his system of glad tidings for all people, and of union to all, whether Jew or

Greek or bond or free:—they will, at least, be fully answered when the whole world shall be prepared to embrace the liberal and philanthropic, the pious and moral doctrine of our Lord, that the two commandments, equal in authority, of love to God and love to man, comprise all duty, all morality, all religion and all divine revelation. This was piety in the beginning of the world, and will be piety in the end. This was the religion of the patriarchs; it is the religion of such Christians as take Christ, as he appears in the Gospels, for their master; it is substantially the religion of pious Hindoos and pious Mussulmans (not to allow piety to whom, would be a breach of these very two commandments laid down by our Lord); and blessed be God, the Father, it is religion pure and undefiled before Him, in which all his servants of all climes and tongues may unite upon earth, as an earnest of their blissful union in the purer eternal kingdom of Heaven.*

Observe, further, from the principles laid down upon our Lord's authority, that a virtuous character is the best preparation for receiving the gospel in the true knowledge and love of it, as well as for enjoying the blessings which it confers in this life, and promises in the life which is to come. The benediction pronounced upon the Centurion, virtually asserting that he was already one of Christ's disciples, was prompted, there is no doubt, by his

* See Note A at the end.

known virtues, his compassionate zeal for an afflicted servant, his rising above the prejudices of his age and country and embracing at every risk the Divine truth of the old dispensation, and his generosity towards a people whose religious discipline would not allow him to enter further than the outer court of their temple,—no less than by his humility before our Lord, and his strongly expressed faith in his miraculous powers under God. For this faith and humility, he was predisposed by those virtues which qualified him to estimate aright the character and mission of one who came to heal the broken-hearted, to bear away diseases, to give sight to the morally blind, to proclaim deliverance to the spiritually captive, to preach glad tidings to the poor and to usher in the acceptable year of the Lord. This was in accordance with one of our Lord's most solemn maxims with regard to the qualification of his disciples:—"My doctrine," said he to the Jews at Jerusalem, "is not mine but His that sent me. If any man will do *his* will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The ground of this decision appears to be, that none but a mind seriously exercised and a heart rightly affected can properly judge of the evidences and claims of a system of truth which is purely moral, having for its end the glory of God in the happiness of man. On this ground our Lord proceeded, when he declared the young ruler who had kept the great commandment

from his youth up, and whom therefore he loved, to be not far from the kingdom of God.

Agreeably to this principle, too, the other centurion, to whom we have already alluded, was selected as the hearer of the Apostle Peter's first declaration of salvation to the Gentiles, because his prayers and his alms had come up in joint and beautiful memorial before God. And, I doubt not, in many instances in all ages, whether relating to unbelievers in Christian countries or to Jews and Heathens, the language applied by the Evangelical historian to a part of an apostolic audience has been strictly appropriate, viz. that as many as were ordained, or rather disposed,—disposed by their affections and habits,—to eternal life, believed.

The rule applies only to *converts* to Christianity, who when sincere have become such by a voluntary preparation of mind, though the result might not be foreseen by themselves. They believed in God, and therefore they believed also in Christ. They loved because they practised virtue, and were in this way led to embrace cordially that grand moral scheme, the consummation of Divine truth, of which the principle is, *Glory, honour, peace, to every soul of man which worketh good.*

It would seem to follow of necessity from the admission of the gospel as the power of God and the wisdom of God, that the more earnestly and diligently it is studied, the better it will be understood and the more highly valued; that the pleasure

derived from it will be in proportion to the love of it, from a knowledge of its fitness and excellence; that oneness with its spirit and obedience to its requirements will always go together; and that the union of faith and virtue is the only qualification for the perfect enjoyment of its promised blessings in that world where faith will be turned into sight, but where charity never faileth.

These are solemnly important conclusions. They should impel us, on the one hand, to inquire seriously into the truth of God by Christ, lest by our own indolence and worldly-mindedness we fail of discovering the pearl of great price; and, on the other hand, to take a willing part in all wise and sincere efforts for the promotion of the moral and spiritual improvement of the world, and to hail with disinterested fervour, and to embrace with fraternal love, all the wise and good, whether from the east or the west, from the north or the south, who enter into the church of Christ with minds enlightened by the wisdom from above, and hearts purified by the influence of Divine truth, praying and seeking only for glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will to men.

We shall thus, my Christian friends, be prepared to unite with the multitude that no man can number, out of every kindred, tribe, tongue and people, and from every dispensation of light,—with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, who, their warfare accomplished, their affections wholly

sanctified and their spirits perfected, will sit down in heavenly places with Him after whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, to pursue divine knowledge, to exercise universal love, to taste pure bliss and to proclaim eternally growing gratitude to the Almighty Father, blessed in himself and blessed, too, in all his creatures for evermore.

To apply the subject to the occasion. There has been recently taken from the earth one to whom many of our humble observations, to whom I solemnly believe the sublime words of our Lord, apply; a rare, perhaps an unparalleled instance of a man who, by the virtuous use of great talents and splendid acquirements, under the Divine Providence and grace, delivered his own spirit from the enthralment of idolatry, and entered by degrees into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

The lately deceased Rajah* Rammohun Roy was, as is well known, a native of Hindoostan, by birth a Brahmin, the highest order of men in that land of castes.† The connexion of his family with the court of the Moguls, together with its rank and property, secured him singular advantages in point of education. He was early instructed in the Arabic and Persian, the great languages of the

* Note B. † Note C.

East, and afterwards in the Sanscrit, in which the sacred books of the Hindoos are written. He was brought up strictly in the doctrines of his sect, but had opportunities when young of understanding thoroughly the Mussulman faith and worship. The simplicity and severity of these, forming such a contrast to the Hindoo superstition and idolatry, led him while yet a youth to reflect seriously upon the state of religion among his own people. He is said, in a memoir drawn up by my valued friend Dr. Carpenter,* which, from the means of information possessed by the writer, may be considered authentic, to have travelled, at the early age of fifteen, into Thibet, to obtain a knowledge of the religion of the Grand Lama, mainly consisting in the worship of a living man, as the true Deity, the Creator and Preserver of the world. This degrading idolatry strengthened his suspicions with regard to the "Gods many" of his countrymen. On the death of his father, and, soon after, of his two brothers, he became possessed of considerable property, and from this time seems to have formed the plan of attempting the reformation of his native religion. With this view he published, at great labour and with much cost, various works, the first of which, written in Persian, with an Arabic preface, was entitled, "Against the Idolatry of all Religions."

In 1814, he removed to Calcutta, for the sake, probably, of escaping persecution, as well as of

* Published in the Bristol Gazette.

studying the English language, and of cultivating the society of our countrymen. Here he enlarged the bounds of his learning and science, but devoted himself chiefly to a series of publications designed to prove that idolatry was an innovation upon the Brahminical religion, the most ancient of whose sacred books inculcated the Unity of the Supreme Being, and his sole right to divine worship. He states very feelingly, in the preface to one of these, translated into English, that the efforts which, out of pure compassion, he was making to reform his countrymen, had stirred up the hatred of his order, and even the anger of his own family, but that he trusted that the day would arrive when his labours would be viewed with justice, perhaps with gratitude; at any rate, that, conscious of the purity of his motives, he looked up to the approbation of the Supreme Being, who seeth in secret and will reward openly.

His efforts were not wholly fruitless. Some learned Brahmins entered into his views, supported him with the aid of their pens, and even formed a religious association upon his principles, which was, till lately at least, in active existence. *

It is pleasing to add, that his mother, though alienated from him at first with the rest of his family, was reconciled to him before her death, and died declaring her conversion to his views of the Brahminical religion.

* Note D.

His theological pursuits did not prevent him from suggesting or joining in other philanthropic schemes for the benefit of his country. He was active and liberal in the support of native schools, and he published a strong appeal against the horrid practice of burning widows.

As early as the year 1817, he expressed himself strongly in favour of the Christian religion, on account of its proved moral tendency. This subject could not be long absent from the mind of so sound a reasoner, so keen an inquirer and so ardent a friend to the best interests of the human race. Embarrassed, however, by the conflicting representations of the various sects of Christians, he resolved to study the Christian doctrine for himself in the original scriptures, for which purpose he made himself master of the Hebrew and Greek languages. The result of his inquiries appeared in a work printed in 1820, in the Sanscrit, the Bengalee and the English, containing selections from the gospels, and entitled "The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness." This work contained enough to satisfy candid minds that he was becoming a Christian. It gave birth to a controversy, in which he was constrained both to inquire further and to state his views more explicitly, and the consequence was, that he avowed himself a believer in Christianity, and in the general views taken of it by Unitarian Christians, which, indeed, he luminously illustrated from the Scriptures and defended

with an ability rarely exceeded by the best English theologians.

He had long entertained the very natural purpose of visiting England, but was for some time prevented by vexatious legal processes, instituted to deprive him of his patrimony on account of his heresy, as the Hindoos stigmatize the belief and worship of the One God. These being happily defeated, he accomplished his wishes in the beginning of the year 1831, from which time, till his death, he was continually in the public eye. He died in the neighbourhood of Bristol, on Friday the 27th of September, after a few days' illness. On examination it appeared that there was disease of the brain,—a fact which may in some measure reconcile his friends to the visitation of Providence by which the world has lost one of its ornaments and benefactors. He died composedly, and though he spoke little, was observed to be frequently engaged in secret prayer.* In Bristol, he expressed strongly his faith in Christ as the resurrection and the life. There can be no doubt, therefore, of his being a Christian, in the fullest sense of the term. As little doubt can be entertained of his being a Unitarian, in the general acceptation of the word, although it is highly probable that he did not adopt all the opinions which are commonly supposed to be entertained by Unitarians, who differ almost as much from one another, as from the other various Christian sects. Several

* Note E.

attempts were made, and by some distinguished persons, to convert him to the popular faith; these he interpreted candidly, but always represented them as of no effect. That he frequently attended the worship of the Church of England, must, therefore, be explained by other motives than his approbation of the doctrine of that church with regard to the nature of the Deity. His most intimate friend in England, the friend indeed at whose house he resided for the greater part of his sojourn in London, states, I learn, explicitly, that he was accustomed to say that *his heart was with the Unitarians*, and it should be added that this gentleman is not himself of our communion.* How far his embracing the Unitarian system in its general outline, considering his education, talents and research, is a testimony in its favor, I am willing to leave to others to decide; but I cannot help saying, that his becoming a Christian, after long, patient and competent inquiry, appears to me to be a strong presumption in behalf of its internal evidence, by which he was impressed before he felt the force of the external evidence; and I may perhaps understand the motive, but I do not admire the wisdom, or admit the justice, much less the charity, of those Christians that would deprive our religion of so distinguished, able and impartial a witness.

His faith was to himself before God, his virtues were for the world; and it is singularly honourable

* Note F.

to his memory that those that courted his society the most in England, and held him in highest respect and esteem, had known him intimately in India, or through Indian connexions.

He wrote and spoke the English language with an ease and propriety remarkable in a foreigner.

He was dignified in his aspect, courteous in his manners, candid in his judgments and liberal in all his views. One of the first sentiments which he expressed to me on his arrival in the metropolis, was his astonishment to find such bigotry amongst the majority of Christians towards the Unitarians, so much resembling that of his idolatrous countrymen against those that renounce their false Gods. If, in his intercourse with us, he was sometimes embarrassed by his Brahminical rank, it should be remembered that the dearest interests of his family were involved in this relation to his country, and that he always represented his caste as a matter of civil and social regulation, and not at all an affair of faith or conscience.*

He was eagerly interested in all the recent improvements in our political, judicial and commercial institutions, and particularly those that affected his native land. At the same time, he was forward to express his gratitude to the supreme Providence, for having placed India under the power of Great Britain, by which it had been preserved from the desolating tyranny of the northern barbarous powers

* Note G.

of that vast continent, and under which, as he believed, the seeds were sown of social and civil reforms, of science, liberty and moral and Christian truth.*

The memoir already referred to states, I am confident with perfect correctness, that "Those who had the best opportunities of knowing him, say that the perusal of the Scriptures was his constant practice; and that his devotion was habitual, manifested by stated prayer, and by a frequent absorbedness of soul, the external expression of which left no room for doubt as to the direction and object of it."

None can deny that our departed Christian brother was an extraordinary man, whether we consider his intellectual energies, his moral qualities, or his theological attainments. Centuries may intervene before his equal in all respects shall rise up in Hindoostan, so bright a light shining in so dark a place. He is a memorable example to the world of what an individual may accomplish by firmness of purpose, diligence, perseverance, fortitude, disinterestedness and candour, in the acquirement of truth, amidst the greatest disadvantages, and the diffusion of truth, amidst opposition and reproach.† Would that they could be warned by his example, who, with all the opportunities of improvement around them, neither inquire nor think, neither instruct nor are instructed, lay down no error and acquire no truth, and, except as far as self-interest

* Note H. † Note I.

prompts, meditate no one good service to their fellow creatures.

The name of Rammohun Roy will endure as long as the history of religious truth. It is already, in part, and will hereafter be generally cherished in both hemispheres, in that which is distinguished by his birth, and in this, which will, it is now probable, have the boast of keeping his honoured relics: *here*, he will be celebrated for breaking the first link of the long chain which has pressed down the heart of his country to the dust; *at home*, when India shall stretch out her hands to the true God, he will be revered as the first of her Reformers and Philanthropists.* And more than this, and above all earthly fame, may we not gather from the promises of the gospel, this morning imperfectly expounded, that when the Throne shall be set, and the books shall be opened, and the dead, from both sea and land, shall be judged out of those things that are written in the books, according to their works, his name will be found in the Book of Life, and the Son of Man will welcome him, with all the righteous, into his Heavenly Father's kingdom! Even so. Amen.

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* Note K.

NOTES.

Note A, p. 10.

I find the thought here suggested, expanded into an argument, in Archdeacon Jeffery's "Select Discourses," an 8vo. volume, published in 1710. In the two first of three of these, entitled, "The several Dispensations of True Religion," are the following passages:

"The Jews, as well as the Christians, did own Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (before there was any kingdom of God, or state of religion set up by Moses) to belong to the kingdom of God, as well as themselves. And the state of religion, which was then the kingdom of God in the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was no other than what was natural, preserved from, and secured against, those corruptions of idolatry and superstition, profaneness and immorality, which had grown upon, and overwhelmed the religion of the generality of mankind. But these patriarchs did distinguish themselves by the purity of their religion, and were the faithful subjects of the kingdom of God, when most men had transferred the allegiance due unto the Most High only, and yielded obedience to those who were no gods.

"The religion of Abraham then was, to keep the way of the Lord, (i. e. to worship Jehovah the Creator of all things, and him only,) and to do justice and judgment, i. e. to obey his laws of everlasting righteousness, the laws of his kingdom. This religion he practised himself. This religion he taught his children, and this religion was the natural kingdom of God. Nor had those patriarchs (of whom the Jews so much boasted)

any other religion than this, which is the universal and eternal religion of mankind."—Pp. 373, 374.

" But the essential and eternal religion of the Jews, of the patriarchs, and of all mankind, does not depend upon time and place and persons, but remains the same in all parts, and in all ages of the world. The Jews were the children of the kingdom, by that religion which was common to them and their forefathers, not by those circumstances of religion which were peculiar to them. They (as so truly religious) sat down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God: and 'tis remarkable that the Jews (who hate Christians) should value themselves upon their relation to those religious patriarchs whose religion was the same as ours; and not less the same, because ours is diverse from that of the Jews. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sat down in the kingdom of God, i. e. were distinguished and signalized by their religion, the privilege of which is represented by their great men of the kingdom being entertained at a feast, such as the peculiar feasts of a kingdom are. Those feasts were not either the Passover or Pentecost or Tabernacles; for at none of those feasts were the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) entertained. Yet they were children of the kingdom of God as much as the Jews, who also were children of the kingdom, by virtue of that religion which was common to them all."—Pp. 382, 383.

" Gentile converts to Christianity are no less the children of Abraham than the Jews; for 'tis not in nature, but in religion, that this relation is founded. And Christians are as much of the religion of Abraham, as ever the Jews were; yea, the state of religion under the Messiah since the abrogation of the Jewish rituals, is the same as the religion of the patriarchs was before the institution of those rituals. The religion of Abraham, and the religion of Christians, are both entirely moral and spiritual; and therefore more the same than the religion of Abraham and the religion of Moses were."—Pp. 389, 390.

" Abraham and his posterity had made a reformation in the state of religion, and casting out all idolatry and superstition

restored the state of religion to what it was at first, before those corruptions were introduced, and made it standard. Abraham Isaac and Jacob were of the reformed religion, whereas their fathers had professed the corrupt religion, and the Teraphim (images) had their name from Terah, the father of Abraham. The kindred which Abraham forsook by the command of God were idolaters: and Abraham reformed the state of religion; and his religion was the same as that of Enoc, and the other godly patriarchs. This was the first dispensation of religion, the religion of the patriarchs and the religion of mankind, before it was corrupted and after it was reformed."—Pp. 414, 415.

NOTE B, p. 18.

Of the title of Rajah, recently borne by Rammohun Roy, Mr. Arnot, who was in habits of daily communication with him for years, both in India and this country, and who acted as private Secretary to him in England, says, in an interesting memoir in the Athenæum, a weekly literary newspaper, of great merit, that it "was regularly conferred on him by his Majesty the King of Delhi, and recognized by the Government of his Britannic Majesty, whose Ministers always addressed him by this title."

On this subject, the valuable memoir of the Rajah, written by the Rev. Dr. Carpenter, and published in the Bristol Gazette, informs us that "the native princes of Delhi, conceiving that they had a claim upon the East India Company to a very considerable amount, commissioned Rammohun Roy as their Envoy to represent and urge it; and they gave him, by firman, the title of Rajah. His official relation and title were recognized by the British Government; but the East India Company have never acknowledged either, though they always treated him with great consideration as a highly-distinguished individual. He was, however, presented to his Majesty by the President of the Board of Control; and had a place assigned to him at the Coronation among the Ambassadors. He appears, indeed, to have had no reason for dissatisfaction with our Government, either in his individual or official capacity."

Note C, p. 18.

The memoir in the Bristol Gazette states that he "was the son of Ram Hant Roy. His grandfather resided at Moorshedabad, and filled some important offices under the Moguls; but being ill-treated by them towards the end of his life, the son took up his abode in the district of Bordonan, where he had landed property. There Rammohun Roy was born; some say about 1780, but more probably some years earlier."

In a letter from the Rajah himself to Mr. Arnot, which is prefixed to the memoir before referred to in the Athenæum, he says, "My ancestors were Brahmăns of a high order, and from time immemorial were devoted to the religious duties of their race, down to my fifth progenitor, who about 140 years ago gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandisement. His descendants ever since have followed his example, and, according to the usual fate of courtiers, with various success, sometimes rising to honour, and sometimes falling; sometimes rich and sometimes poor; sometimes exulting in success, sometimes miserable through disappointment. But my maternal ancestors being of the sacerdotal order by profession, as well as by birth, and of a family than which none holds a higher rank in that profession, have, up to the present day, uniformly adhered to a life of religious observances and devotion, preferring peace and tranquillity of mind to the excitements of ambition and all the allurements of worldly grandeur."

Note D, p. 20.

Mr. Arnot says, that during the greater part of the period of his residence at Calcutta, "the whole powers of his mind were directed to the vindication of the doctrine of the unity of God. In this he maintained, the sacred books of Hindūs and Mussulmans, Jews and Christians, agreed; and that all apparent deviations from it were modern corruptions. He propagated it day and night, by word and writing, with the zeal of an apostle and the self-devotion of a martyr. He was ever ready to main-

tain it against all gainsayers, from the believer in thirty-three millions of gods to the denier of one: for both extremes are common in the East. The writer remembers finding him at his Garden House, near Calcutta, one evening, about seven o'clock, closing a dispute with one of the followers of Būdh, who denied the existence of a Deity. The Rajah had spent the whole day in the controversy, without stopping for food, rest or refreshment, and rejoicing more in confuting one Atheist than in triumphing over a hundred idolaters: the credulity of the one he despised; the scepticism of the other he thought pernicious; for he was deeply impressed with the importance of religion to the virtue and happiness of mankind."

Note E, p. 22.

The "account of the last scenes" is given in the Bristol Gazette, in the words of "a friend whose services were incessant," and who was "best qualified to give a narration of them."

"On Thursday, the 19th of September, Mr. Estlin, who had enjoyed much intercourse with the Rajah during the preceding week, and had occasionally corresponded with him before he left India, called accidentally at Stapleton, and was informed that he had been indisposed since the preceding day, but had thought medical advice unnecessary, as he had taken some of his usual remedies. On Mr. E.'s being announced, however, he requested to see him. He found the Rajah so ill with feverish symptoms as to occasion him considerable alarm. Medicines were prescribed, and followed by some relief; but an extremely dry and glazed tongue, frequent pulse and incessant restlessness (though without much increase of heat or local pain) indicated the continuance of serious disorder. On the following Saturday Dr. Prichard visited him, and Dr. Carrick attended in consultation on Monday the 23rd. Some of the symptoms in the progress of his illness led to the conclusion that his head was considerably affected, though no pain was felt

there, the stomach being the part of which he most complained.

"His indisposition experienced but a temporary check from the remedies: severe spasms, with paralysis of the left arm and leg came on during Thursday last, and he fell into a state of stupor during the afternoon of that day, from which he never revived; but breathed his last at twenty-five minutes after two on Friday morning, the 27th inst. His son, Rajah Ram Roy, and two Hindoo servants, with several attached friends who had watched over him from the first day of his illness, were with him when he expired.

"Mr. Hare, of Bedford Square, London, under whose roof the Rajah had for two years lived, a welcome guest, was also with him during the greater part of his illness; and Mr. Hare's niece, who was well acquainted with his habits, and possessed his full confidence and strong regard, attended upon him day and night, with a degree of earnest and affectionate solicitude, well deserving the epithet of filial.

"He repeatedly acknowledged, during his illness, his sense of the kindness of all around him, and in strong language expressed the confidence he felt in his medical advisers. It was a source of gratitude to the friends with whom he resided in London, to find, that, distressing as the event was to the family he was visiting, he had every comfort and accommodation that a large house, a quiet and healthy situation, and attached and affluent friends could bestow.

"He conversed very little during his illness, but was observed to be often engaged in prayer. He told his son and those around him that he should not recover.

"An examination of the body took place on Saturday, when the brain was found to be inflamed, containing some fluid, and covered with a kind of purulent effusion; its membrane also adhered to the skull, the result, probably, of previously existing disease: the thoracic and abdominal viscera were healthy. The case appeared to be one of Fever, producing great prostration of the vital powers, and accompanied by inflammation of the brain,

which did not exhibit, in their usual degree, the symptoms of that affection.

"The Rajah was a remarkably stout, well-formed man, nearly six feet in height, with a fine, handsome and expressive countenance. A cast for a bust was taken a few hours after his death."

Note F, p. 23.

Of the religious habits of the Rajah, Dr. Carpenter says, in the Bristol Gazette, "While in London, he repeatedly attended the worship of the Unitarians, at their different chapels in or near the metropolis; and he twice attended their anniversary meetings: but it was his system to avoid so far identifying himself with any religious body, as to make himself answerable for their acts and opinions; and he also wished to hear preachers of other denominations who had acquired a just celebrity. He appears to have most frequented the church of the Rev. Dr. Kenney, (St. Olave's, Southwark,) who peculiarly interested him by the Christian spirit and influence of his discourses. In Bristol, he attended worship at the Unitarian chapel in Lewin's Mead; and there he had directed his son statedly to attend. If he had lived, however, he would have visited other places of worship at their second services; and he went once to the church in the Hotwell Road, with the expectation of hearing the Rev. Mr. Hensman."

Note G, p. 24.

The character of the Rajah is delineated with great delicacy and moral discrimination in the Memoir, so frequently quoted in these pages, in the Bristol Gazette. "The great notoriety of the Rajah, together with his own unvarying urbanity and solicitude to avoid giving pain to any one, even to the inconsiderate and presuming, exposed him to extreme interruption and inconvenience, and at times to much vexation. Habitual caution to shun every overt-act, by which his Brahminical rank might be forfeited, to his own and his children's injury, and to

the impairing of his hopes and means of usefulness, seems occasionally to have given to his system of conduct the air of uncertainty, if not of ambiguity. Perhaps, also, there were occasions when questions proposed, with the skill of the practised disputant, to elicit an expression which might support some preformed opinion respecting the Rajah's sentiments, led him, through ignorance of the real bearings of the case, to accord with that which his remarkable clearness of discrimination would have rejected at once if the whole tendency of the inquiry had been before him; and this effect may have been aided by those nice shades in the import of words, which are, as opinions modify, continually varying in their influence. And, sometimes, that disposition to acquiescence, which eastern politeness requires, and which his own kindness of heart contributed to strengthen, was known to place him in circumstances, and lead him to expressions, which made his sincerity questioned. But where he was best and fully known, the simplicity, candour, explicitness and openness of his mind were striking and acknowledged; and from these, together with his profound acquirements, his extensive information, his quick discrimination of character, his delicacy and honourable sentiments, his benevolent hopes and purposes for human welfare, his benignant concern for the comfort and happiness of all around him, his affectionateness and humility of disposition, his gentleness and quick sensibility, there was a charm in his presence and conversation which made one feel love for him as well as high respect. It was impossible to be much with him in the narrow circle of private life without entertaining attachment to him; or without feelings approaching to reverence, for the greatness of his endowments and the way in which he had devoted them to the welfare of his fellow-men, for the high excellences of his character, for the purity and refinement of his sentiments, and for the earnest and elevated piety of his spirit."

Note H, p. 25.

The Rajah candidly acknowledges, in his letter to Mr. Arnot, an early prejudice against the British rule in India, which was overcome by a nearer view of the British residents in that country, and a more thorough knowledge of the plans and measures of the government.

Note I, p. 25.

The Rajah refers with much sensibility to the persecution which he endured from his countrymen, in the letter to Mr. Arnot. "My continued controversies with the Brahmăns on the subject of their idolatry and superstition, and my interference with their custom of burning widows, and other pernicious practices, revived and increased their animosity against me with renewed force; and, through their influence with my family, my father was again obliged to withdraw his countenance openly, though his limited pecuniary support was still continued to me.

"After my father's death I opposed the advocates of idolatry with still greater boldness; availing myself of the art of printing, now established in India, I published various works and pamphlets against their errors in the native and foreign languages. This raised such a feeling against me that I was at last deserted by every person, except two or three Scotch friends, to whom, and the nation to which they belong, I always feel grateful. The ground which I took in all my controversies was not that of opposition to Brahmănism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to shew that the idolatry of the Brahmăns was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of their ancient books and authorities, which they profess to revere and obey. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition and resistance to my opinions, several highly respectable persons, both among my own relations and others, began to adopt the same sentiments."

NOTE K, p. 26.

"To the public testimonies already adduced, may be added that of the celebrated Sismondi, who, in an article in the Revue Encyclopédique for 1824, after some important observations respecting the institution of castes and the sacrifice of widows, thus proceeds: 'A glorious reform has, however, begun to spread among the Hindoos. A Brahmin, whom those who know India agree in representing as one of the most virtuous and enlightened of men, Rammohun Roy, is exerting himself to restore his countrymen to the worship of the true God, and to the union of morality and religion. His flock is small, but increases continually. He communicates to the Hindoos all the progress that thought has made among the Europeans. He is among them, by a much juster title than the Missionaries, the Apostle of Christianity.' "—Memoir in Bristol Gazette. A translation of Sismondi's article of Review, from which this passage is taken, may be seen in the Monthly Repository, (Old Series,) XX. 65—67.

"There were," says Mr. Arnot, in the Athenæum, "three maxims in politics, in ethics, and in religion, which he often repeated; with these I shall sum up this brief sketch of his life and character. The first he expressed in an Arabic sentence, *Insân abid ul ihsân:* 'Man is the slave of benefits.' The second, a couplet from the Anwari Soheili, which will be found in many a fair lady's album: 'The enjoyment of the two worlds (this and the next) rests on these two points; kindness to friends, civility to enemies.' And the third, from the philosophic Sadi—which he often repeated, and often expressed a wish to have inscribed on his tomb:

THE TRUE WAY OF SERVING GOD IS TO DO GOOD TO MAN.

"Amen: so let it be: the religious reformer of the Hindûs could not have a more appropriate epitaph."

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A

PLEA

FOR THE

CATHOLIC CLAIMS;

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL IN ESSEX STREET,

MARCH 10, 1813.

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A

GENERAL FAST.

BY THOMAS BELSHAM.

NON IGNARA MALI, MISERIS SUCCURRERE DISCO.

VIRGIL.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON AND CO.,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1813.

Printed by C. Wood,
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THE Author of the Discourse here offered to the Public, though he earnestly advocates the Catholic Claims, cannot justly be suspected of a desire to pay undue court to the Catholic Body; as, since the decease of his learned and estimable friend, the Reverend Dr. Alexander Geddes, it has not been his good fortune to become acquainted with a single individual of the Catholic persuasion. His sole object is, to bear his public, however feeble testimony, to the grand principle of Universal Religious Liberty. That, in pleading this great cause, his feelings may have been more than usually interested by the consciousness of being himself a member of *the only Christian sect which is now proscribed by pains and penalties*, he will not attempt to dissemble. But he trusts, that his ruling motive is, a pre-eminent regard to Truth and Liberty.

The following Discourse was drawn up for the late Fast day. It was delivered to a much larger congregation on the Sunday following; and a general and earnest wish having been expressed for its publication, it is now respectfully commended to the candid perusal of those, who then honoured it with their approbation.

Essex House,
March 24, 1813.

A

PLEA

FOR

THE CATHOLIC CLAIMS.

A FAST SERMON.

ROM. XIV, 13.—*Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.*

I CANNOT but congratulate the age and country in which we live, upon the rapid progress which the great principles of religious liberty have made in the world, and particularly in this nation, in the course of the last century. A hundred years ago, whatever might be the liberality of a few enlightened individuals, there was hardly any sect or party of Christians which did not hold the principles of persecution, which did not maintain, that certain opinions were so heretical and dangerous to the souls of men, that the profession of them ought not to be tolerated by the civil power, whatever might

be the moral character or the peaceable demeanour of their teachers and abettors. The catholic persecuted the protestant for heresy, while the protestant, loud in his condemnation of intolerance, equally persecuted the catholic for idolatry, and both united in persecuting the anti-trinitarians, as a sect which ought to be exterminated from the earth. This principle of persecution for opinions only, is now generally discarded. And though some fiery bigots may remain in every sect, it is nevertheless probable, that, in this age and country, there is not any one denomination of Christians, protestant or catholic, conformist or nonconformist, which would, as a body, justify the infliction of pains and penalties upon the advocates of any opinions, merely for avowing or teaching those opinions, however unscriptural or dangerous they might be thought.

This great principle of universal religious liberty, and of freedom from all penal restraints upon the profession of any religious principles, and the exercise of a corresponding religious worship, was supported unanimously at a late meeting of one respectable body of Christians *, and carried, by a triumphant majority, in another †, which bodies were composed of mem-

* The General Body of dissenting ministers of the three denominations.

† The Body of Deputies of the dissenting congregations

bers as widely differing from each other in theological systems as can easily be conceived. Nevertheless, all parties concurred in an application to the legislature, for the repeal of all laws, inflicting penalties upon a religious account only.

The government of the country itself participates in the same liberal and truly catholic spirit. All protestant nonconformists, *except Unitarians**, are now protected by law in the open profession of their religious principles, and the exercise of religious worship. And there is great reason to hope, from the wisdom and the liberality of the legislature, that this singular exception will not continue long. Even the catholics are protected, as they ought to be, in the free exercise of their religious worship. And the performance of the official duties of the catholic priesthood, which, half a century ago, was a capital offence, is now, wisely and justly, authorised by the law of the land†. And even those who are most pointedly hostile to the catholic claims, are studiously solicitous to make known their wish, that if any legal restriction yet remains upon the most open and

in London and its vicinity, W. Smith, esq. M. P. in the chair.

* Unitarians are still liable to the terrible penalties of the Blasphemy Act, 9 and 10 William III, in common with deists, atheists, and apostates.—*Blackstone's Comm.* b. iv, c. 4.

† By a statute, 27 Eliz., any popish priest, born in the dominions of the crown of England, who shall come from be-

public profession of their principles and exercise of their worship, they would be the first to solicit their repeal *. How different a spirit this from that which operated a century ago, when statute after statute was enacted against the catholics, each more grievous than the preceding, till, in the end, every person professing the catholic religion, was treated as an outlaw and outcast from his native country! † Let us not say that former times were better than these. Much has been done in this eminently tolerating reign, and under the mild administration of George the Third, to break the yoke of religious intolerance. And not only has our venerable monarch amply redeemed the pledge which he gave at the commencement of his reign, to "maintain the toleration inviolable," a declaration which was received by the nation at large with an enthusiastic rapture, which some of us, even now, remember with delight; but he has far exceeded his promise, and has extended the limits of religious freedom, both

yond sea, and shall stay three days in England, without conforming and taking the oaths, is guilty of high treason; and all persons harbouring him are guilty of felony without benefit of clergy. This and other cruel statutes are repealed, by Stat. 18, George III, to all who take the prescribed oaths.—*Blackstone's Comm.* b. iv, c. 4.

* See the resolutions of the Protestant Union, at the Crown and Anchor, signed by Granville Sharpe, esq.

† See Sir Henry Parnell's History of the Penal Laws against the Irish Catholics.

to protestant and catholic dissenters, to a degree almost unknown in the history of civilized Europe.

Still, however, the state of religious liberty in this country is very far from perfection. For, as one step in the progress of science leads on to another, and as one philosophical discovery opens the way to many others, and the prospect extends as we advance, so, likewise, one step in the improvement of political science and the art of government leads on to another, till, by a gradual, but continually accelerated pace, universal amelioration advances to its greatest perfection.

At the commencement of the present reign, had it been foretold, that religious liberty would advance so far before its close, that the word *toleration* itself would fall into disrepute, and the right of every individual, whether catholic or protestant, to avow and teach his religious principles, and to worship God in the manner which his own conscience prescribes, would be almost universally allowed, and peaceably, and even legally acknowledged and exercised, it would have been thought incredible, and impossible: and the man who should have ventured to utter the prediction, would have been regarded as an enthusiast or a visionary. But now, that the event has actually taken place, it does not ap-

pear in the least degree wonderful. And, instead of being satisfied with what has been already obtained, we are eagerly looking forward to something more and better. Forgetting the things which are behind, we reach forth to those that are before — and very justly. For we have no more reason than our ancestors had to believe, that we have reached the summit of perfection. It is natural for man to pant after improvement. And the march of knowledge and truth, and with it the progress of liberty, of virtue, and of human happiness, is uninterrupted and irresistible. Nothing can stop or retard its course. It will force its way, in spite of every obstacle which it may encounter from ignorance, prejudice, self-interest, pride, and folly. The owls and the bats, who thrive in darkness, and who hate the light, may blink and scream, and show every mark of antipathy and terror, but they must fly to their holes and caverns; for, regardless of their feeble opposition, the splendid luminary will continue his career, and shine more and more unto the perfect day. The progress of improvement, intellectual and moral, individual and national, is like the flowing tide. A wave advances beyond the rest, and it falls back again; you would suppose that the sea was retreating; but the next wave pushes further still; and the succeeding one goes be-

yond that: so that, by a gradual, and, for some time, imperceptible, but sure and irresistible progress, the mighty element bears down every obstruction, and, in due time, occupies its destined station. Even before the inadvertent spectator is aware, the soil and slime, and all unsightly and rugged objects, disappear, and the whole space is occupied by the beautiful and majestic main. Such, no doubt, will be the uncontroulable progress of amelioration, under the divine government, till that auspicious æra shall arrive, marked in resplendent characters in the decrees of Heaven, and to which the golden index of prophecy continually points, when the "knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the seas," and the reign of truth, freedom, virtue, and happiness, shall be universal and everlasting.

This is, indeed, an animating and a glorious prospect. It is, however, at present, at a great distance. But it is pleasant to know, that such a happy state of things is in the contemplation and purpose of the Almighty. It is still more pleasant, to see that the grand æra is already begun, and that the improvement of mankind is advancing with no lingering step. Those of us who can take a retrospect of fifty years, can bear testimony to the important fact: and should be utterly unworthy of the privileges with which we have been favoured, if we were

not thankful to that indulgent Providence, which has cast our lot in such a wonderful and eventful period. And those who, fifty years hence, will be able to take a similar retrospect, will no doubt see still greater reason for gratitude and admiration.

But the most delightful circumstance of all is, to be actively and successfully engaged in co-operating to the accomplishment of this magnificent design. We are, my friends, all in our respective stations, workers together with God: and the enlightened and religious philosopher will rejoice in the persuasion, that the evil, as well as the good, are, though unintentionally, fulfilling the purposes of an all-wise Providence. But to be conscious that it has ever been the object of our highest and best ambition, and, of our most earnest, strenuous, and persevering exertion, to concur and co-operate in the divine plan, is, indeed, a source of pure, exquisite, and unalloyed satisfaction, of joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Nor is this satisfaction abated, even though we may have been apparently disappointed in every undertaking, and can discover little or no fruit accruing from our honourable and benevolent, however humble exertions. The willing mind is all that God requires. It is the heart alone to which the eye of Omniscience is directed; and in proportion to the benevolent exertion, will be

the eventual reward. As to success, it is comparatively nothing. Omnipotent benignity will not, cannot, for a moment, be destitute of instruments abundantly competent to carry on its own cause, in its own way, and to complete all in its own time. And every one who is zealous in the service, will be favoured with that proportion of success which the general good requires. And more than this ought not to be desired.

And yet, if the benevolent, active lover of mankind, all whose thoughts and affections, all whose aims, and purposes, and exertions, are set upon doing good, reviewing the course, and effect of his labours, at the close of his career, should see reason to believe, that his faithful exertions, however humble, have been owned and honoured, so as to have been instrumental, though in a small degree, in promoting the great cause which lies nearest to his heart: the delight which would arise from this conviction, is the sublimest, and the most exquisite, which a reasonable and moral agent can enjoy. It overrules all the pains and sufferings which arise from fatigue, danger, poverty, contempt, and persecution. None of these things move him. His happiness is such as the world knoweth not of. It is the happiness of heaven. It is, with reverence I speak it, in its degree, the happiness of God himself. For we can form no conception of divine felicity, more rational or more exalted than

this, that it arises from thoughts, and purposes, and acts of benevolence, from a fixed, immutable resolve to make his creatures happy; and from a certain knowledge, that, in due season, his omnipotent will shall be accomplished in all its infinite extent and grandeur.

But to return to the subject from which we have digressed. The state of religious liberty in this country, and it may be added in the world at large, though far better than it was fifty years ago, and still improving, is nevertheless very distant from perfection. And there is a case, which, even now, engages and almost engrosses, the public attention, in which this great and important principle is most deeply interested. I mean that of the *Catholic Claims:* which the Commons of the United Kingdom, have, with great wisdom and liberality, agreed to take into their most serious consideration. And as the avowed object of that national solemnity, which is the occasion of our present meeting, is to promote national reformation, it cannot be deemed foreign to the purpose of the institution to offer a brief abstract of the arguments in favour of a measure, which, if it should succeed, will, I am perswaded, tend, most directly and powerfully, to improve the national character, and to establish and enlarge the national resources, by discountenancing and discouraging that worst of

passions, religious bigotry, jealousy, and animosity; and by promoting a spirit of loyalty, of liberty, and of fraternal concord and union.

It is, indeed, maintained by some, that the catholics *have no ground of complaint;* that, in the free exercise of their religion, they are protected by law; and that no restrictions are laid upon them, but what are necessary for the safety of the government and the country.

It is allowed, to the credit of the age, that all penal severities, against the catholic persuasion, are blotted out of the statute book. The catholic may now profess his religion, and worship the God of his fathers, in the way that his forefathers worshipped, without being exposed to fine or imprisonment: and the ministers of religion may officiate at the altar, without being liable to the punishment of death. But it does not therefore follow, that they do not suffer, even yet, a very considerable degree of persecution.

Persecution is of two kinds, positive and negative: it is the infliction of pains and penalties, or the withholding of rights. From the former, the catholic and the protestant nonconformists, with the *single exception of the Unitarians*, are happily exempted. But under the latter, they suffer many, not trifling nor imaginary, but real and grievous wrongs.

The English catholic, be his property ever so great, his character ever so respectable, his

loyalty or his patriotism ever so unimpeachable, is, by law, peremptorily excluded from all offices in cities and corporations, from a seat in either house of parliament, from voting at elections for representatives, and from all offices, civil and military.

In Ireland, where the pale of catholic toleration is more extended than in Great Britain, the remaining disabilities, though fewer in number, are, if possible, still more galling and offensive. A catholic, in that island, is allowed to pursue the professions of law and of arms. In these professions, he is permitted to rise to a certain rank, and there he stops. Whatever be his talents, whatever his merit, whatever his past exertions, whatever his loyalty and attachment to the constitution, if he is the only person at the bar, or in the field, who is qualified to fill the vacant post, if his commander-in-chief, if the counsellors and advisers of the crown, if the sovereign himself, be ever so desirous of advancing him to a superior post, if it be the unanimous, concurrent wish of the people, it is all in vain. The door is closed upon all the pursuits of honourable ambition, upon all the honours and rewards due to superior merit, upon all the benefits which his country might derive from his transcendant abilities. It is shut, and none can open. In contradiction to the judgment, and in opposition to the united wishes, and the most evident

interest of the monarch and the nation, the proscribed catholic, even though he were a Marlborough, a Nelson, a Chatham, or a Fox, must be superseded, and must make up his mind to stand by and to see others, his juniors in age and experience, his inferiors in every talent and qualification for office, put over his head, and to retire from the service of an applauding country, to which it was the favourite wish of his heart, and the main object of his honest ambition, to have devoted his best and maturest powers, in the prime and vigour of his days, when he is most capable of splendid, useful exertion, he is compelled to retire, with a sorrowing and indignant spirit, to solitude, to inactivity, and obscurity*.

* That this is not mere imaginary supposition will appear from the following extract, from a speech from colonel O'Shea, addressed to the chairman of the catholic meeting, of the county of Dublin, held at Kilmainham, in the year 1811: "Having made, in the Austrian army, the campaigns against the common enemy, I found myself, at the late unfortunate struggle at Wagram, a colonel, commanding a regiment of three thousand men. A rank I still retain, with the advantage of being able to resume my military station, should Austria again make common cause against the despotism of France. And there, every employment, even the command of the army, is open to me, catholic or protestant. And such is our national reputation, that the archduke Charles said to me, 'Never was the army of Austria better officered than when possessing so many Irish,' of whom, at one time, upwards of thirty were generals. How different my situation at home! Although of the oldest and most respectable families in the country, possessing fortune to back

And is not this persecution? persecution of the most mortifying and insulting kind? to a generous mind more insupportable than fine or imprisonment, than torture, or even death itself, to have a public mark of degradation fixed upon him, in the face of his country and the world? and to have the cup of honourable remuneration dashed out of his hands, at the very moment when it is applied to his lips?

And what is the crime which the catholic has committed, to be thus treated as an outcast in his native land? to be denied the rights and privileges of a free-born citizen? The only reason which has been assigned—the only one which can be assigned—is this, that *he professes the religion of his forefathers:* of those brave Englishmen, who, while they acknowledged a spi-

it, let my acquirements and talents be what they will, I am curbed in my pursuit. No confidence is to be placed in me, no command is to be entrusted to me, *because I am a catholic.*"—See *Edinburgh Review, Nov.* 1812.

This grievance is, indeed, so intolerable, that the Speaker of the House of Commons, in his eloquent speech, on Tuesday, 9th of March, against the catholic claims, acknowledged, that this is a case which requires immediate redress. He was justly reminded by Mr. Ponsonby, that, for this very doctrine, six years ago, the whig administration were dismissed; and Mr. Ponsonby shrewdly observed, that it "would have been happy for the country, if the university of Oxford, which at that time set up the cry of, 'No Popery,' had then possessed so enlightened and able a representative" This shows, however, the progress of liberal opinions, in the short compass of six years.

ritual subjection to the see of Rome, at the same time, firmly and successfully resisted the arrogant encroachments of the papal power*; and who wrested, from a capricious and insolent tyrant, on the plains of Runnymede, the Magna Charta of British liberty. These are the men who are denied the enjoyment of those privileges for which their high-spirited ancestors fought and bled.

But what is it that these catholics desire? Is it the *possession of political power?* No.—And it requires no little exertion of Christian charity to believe, that the consciences of many who bring the accusation, do not belie the charge they make. No, it is not the actual possession

* After the base conduct of John, in resigning his crown to the pope, the legislature, indignant at the meanness of the monarch, in the reign of his wise and valiant son and successor, Edward the First, enacted several statutes in opposition to the exorbitant claims of the court of Rome, which statutes were confirmed, and others to the same purpose were enacted in the reign of Edward the Third. But the famous statute of præmunire, which is the foundation of all other statutes against exorbitant ecclesiastical claims, was passed in the 16th year of Richard the Second. This statute confiscates the property, attaches the person, and puts out of the king's protection every one who procures, at Rome or elsewhere, any translations, excommunications, bulles, &c. The men who made these laws were catholics. "The writ of præmunire," says Blackstone, "took its original from the exorbitant power claimed and exercised in England by the pope, which, even in the days of blind zeal, was too heavy for our ancestors to bear."—*Blackstone's Comm.* b. iv, c. 8.

of power which the catholics solicit. If all they ask were to be granted to them to-morrow, the addition made to the political power of the catholics would be but as a drop from the ocean, or as the dust of the balance. They would neither be judges, nor generals, nor representatives of the people. What the catholics implore is, that they may not lie under a public proscription; that they may not without a crime, either proved or alledged, be degraded from the rank of citizens of a free country: that they may be permitted, when their sovereign approves, and when their country invites, but not otherwise, to devote their lives, their fortunes, their talents, and their influence, to the service of their country, to the defence of its constitution, its rights, its laws, and liberties, and to the advancement of its prosperity, whether in the senate, at the bar, on the bench, or in the field. Is this an unreasonable request? Can these solicitations continue to be urged in vain? Will the country always turn a deaf ear to the claims of some of its best, its bravest, and most loyal citizens? It cannot be. Surely, it cannot be.

But let us now inquire what objection can possibly be alledged against granting a request which it might have been believed and expected, would, to every humane and considerate mind,

to every man who possesses the heart of a Briton, or the principles of a Christain, appear self-evidently reasonable and just.

First, it is alledged that the catholics cannot give *sufficient security* for their loyalty to the crown, and their fidelity to the constitution.

Sufficient security! What security can be asked or given, or even conceived greater or more satisfactory, than that which may be collected from the uniform, undeviating tenor of conduct, whether of individuals or of societies? And have not the catholics, for the last century, and especially for the last fifty years, notwithstanding all their persecutions, their disqualifications, their degradations, and even the insults which they have experienced, notwithstanding the rejection, time after time, of their humble and reasonable petitions to the legislature and to the crown, notwithstanding all their bitter disappointments in the violation of promises which they understood to have been made, and of compacts, which they conceived to have been formed*,

* Whatever promises were made or understood to be made by those who negociated the important measure of the Union, and how mortifying soever the disappointment of the catholics, it is a pleasure to reflect that the character of the sovereign was in no respect implicated. No royal promise was violated. Of this, the following anecdote, if authentic, as it is said to be, contains ample proof. During the negociation, Mr. secretary Dundas, afterwards lord Melville, submitted to his majesty a draught of the proposed articles of Union to learn the royal pleasure, and to take his majesty's commands upon

and in consequence of which their support was given to that great and salutary, but unpopular measure, the Union of the sister kingdoms, have they not, in all these circumstances, and under all these provocations, approved themselves the most faithful and dutiful subjects of the crown? Have they not been ready, in circumstances the most trying, to exert themselves to the very utmost that the law allowed, to manifest their attachment to the constitution, and to oppose the attacks of foreign invaders, and the perils of domestic treason? * Has not their perse-

the subject. The monarch, upon this occasion, is reported to have said, "I hope, Mr. Dundas, I am not pledged to extend the privileges of the catholics."—"Your majesty," replied the right honourable secretary, "is pledged to nothing: but your majesty's ministers flatter themselves that the clauses relating to the catholics will be interpreted liberally."—"But, Mr. Dundas, you recollect the coronation oath."—"I do recollect it, sire," replies the secretary, "but your majesty will have the goodness to consider, that there is nothing in that oath which can bind your majesty from concurring in any measure which the wisdom of parliament may recommend."—"None of your Scotch metaphysics for me, Mr. Dundas," interrupted the monarch, with some warmth; "I do not approve of your Scotch metaphysics:" and immediately broke up the conference. Who would not wish, that a mind so honourable had been more enlightened, even though it should have been through the medium of Mr. Dundas's Scotch metaphysics?

† "In the year 1795, lord Petre raised a corps of two hundred and fifty men, for his majesty's service, equipped and trained at his own expense. He requested that his son might be appointed to command it. This was refused, on

vering loyalty been almost in proportion to the oppressions which they have endured? Have not their political virtues run parallel with their political injuries? so that the lively expression of the poet is almost literally applicable to the loyalty of the catholics:—

"The beaten spaniel's fondness not so strange."

And are we now to be told, that the catholics can give no security for their allegiance? that they will become disloyal, seditious, and turbulent, when their just claims are allowed? and that they will renounce their attachment to the constitution, just at the time when they are admitted to a full share in its blessings?

But it is alledged, that the priest can *absolve the catholic from his oath of allegiance:* and that it is an avowed principle of the Roman church, that faith is not to be kept with heretics.

This imputation, the catholics unanimously and indignantly disavow. The question was formally and officially proposed, some years ago, to six of the most celebrated catholic universities upon the continent, previously to the repeal of the penal statutes then in force, and received a complete and satisfactory an-

account of his religion. Another officer was appointed to the command; and lord Petre delivered over the corps, completely equipped, and completely trained, into the hands of government, and his son served in the ranks!"—See *An Address to Protestants, by Charles Butler, esq.*, p. 3.

swer *. And the catholics firmly and justly appeal to the uniform tenor of their conduct in private life, as well as to all their public engagements, to show that no description of citizens, no denomination of religionists, let their profession be what it may, adhere more faithfully and religiously to all their engagements, public and private, than those of the catholic persuasion. And if catholics are not bound by their oaths, what is there to hinder them from taking seats in either house of parliament, or what disqualifies them from aspiring to the highest offices, civil or military?

The appeal, however, is made to *fact*. Catholics have violated their faith with those whom they called heretics, in the case of the emperor Sigismond and the Bohemian reformers †, in the bloody massacre of St. Bartholomew, and in the revocation of the famous edict of Nantes.

The catholics, nevertheless, though the facts

* An Abstract of the Answers of the Six Foreign Universities, 1788, may be found in the Supplementary Appendix to Sir John Cox Hippisley's Speech on the Catholic Question, No. VII. The originals are in the possession of Charles Butler, esq., and open to inspection.—*Address to Protestants*, p. 13.

† The very word of the Safe-conduct of the emperor Sigismond to John Huss, are, "Omni prorsus impedimento remoto, transire, stase, morari, et REDIRE, libere permittatis sibique et suis." Pope John XXIII. also added his Safe-conduct.—*Gilpin's Life of Huss*, p. 188—193.

are undeniable, most strenuously maintain, that the infamous tyrants who violated their imperial or royal word are not justified in their treachery by the catholic doctrine, even though their disgraceful proceedings were sanctioned by popes or councils. They regard this shameful conduct with as much indignation and horror as the protestants themselves: and would be as far from imitating it in similar circumstances. Nor is it just to impute to children the iniquities of the fathers, nor to charge upon a body of men, or upon the principles which they profess, the crimes of individuals, however distinguished.

What, for example, was the conduct of Charles the Second to the presbyterians, who restored him with unrestricted prerogatives to the throne of his ancestors? What was the return made by the nation to the zealous nonconformists, who, with confiding simplicity, supported a Bill by which they were themselves excluded from offices and honours, in order to keep out the catholics, under a promise, expressed or understood, that they should speedily be restored to their political rights?* And

* The parliament which enacted the Test Act, the sole object of which was, the exclusion of the catholics, and the title of which is, "An Act for preventing Dangers which may happen from Popish Recusants," was desirous to release the protestant Dissenters from its operation, but was prevented by the king, who was exasperated at the conduct of the Dissenters, and who first prorogued and then dissolved the parliament, at the time when a bill for the re-

where was the gratitude of the established church, after it had, by the aid of the nonconformists, which it had implored in the hour of danger, compelled a catholic tyrant to abdicate the throne? But shall we then say that it is a doctrine of the church of England, that faith is not to be kept with nonconformists? God forbid. Let every one bear his own burden. Let every one suffer the disgrace of his violated honour. But let not the innocent be confounded with the guilty: nor the honourable members of either the catholic or the protestant churches bear the opprobrium of proceedings, which they peremptorily disavow, and which they would neither imitate nor approve.

It is further urged, that the catholic acknowledges *subjection to a foreign jurisdiction*; and that the pope is at this instant in the power of the worst and most malignant enemy of the United Kingdom.

The objection is plausible. But, in my estimation, greater stress has been laid upon it than it will reasonably bear. We are again and again assured, by the catholics, that the deference which the catholic owes to the holy father is purely spiritual. That he acknowledges no power in the pope to absolve him from oaths of allegiance, or to loosen the bonds of civil obligation. Nor

lief of the Dissenters was in the last stage of its progress through both houses. — See *Furneaux's Letters to Blackstone*, lett. vi.

does the bishop of Rome himself pretend to it. A wise administration, disposed to conciliation, would soon discover some method of settling this difficulty consistently with the religious principles of the honest catholic. Nor will the catholic ask, nor will a prudent government admit of any intercourse with a foreign potentate but what shall be public and avowed.

Secondly, it is objected, that if these claims are conceded to the catholics, *they cannot be withheld from the protestant nonconformist.*

And in the eye of reason, of equity, and of Christian liberality, the argument is conclusive, and the consequence undeniable. Whatever reason there may be to elevate the catholic to the rank and privileges of a freeborn Briton, there is at least equal reason to grant the same privilege to the protestant nonconformist, while his conduct is loyal, dutiful, andpeaceable: not to mention the circumstance, upon which indeed I lay but little stress, that he has no intercourse with a foreign hierarchy. And the time will come when the justice, which, for want of better information and more comprehensive views, is now denied, will be granted with cheerfulness, and all will see, that it is for the interest and prosperity, both of the community and of individuals, that no civil distinctions should be allowed, no political disabilities imposed upon account of differences in religious

opinions. Test laws never existed in one large district of the United Kingdom, and they have for many years been abolished in another, yet no inconvenience whatever has resulted from it, but the contrary. And, from the accelerated progress of intellectual and moral improvement, we hope, at no very great distance of time, to hail the day when the whole religious penal code shall, at once and for ever, be erased from the statute book, which it has so long disfigured and disgraced, and be cast into the gulf of oblivion, as a mill-stone into the sea, to rise no more.

In the mean time, though the liberation of the protestant nonconformists follows directly and irresistibly, in reason, in justice, in liberality, and in true policy, from granting the catholic claims, it does not necessarily follow in *fact*. For who will presume to say, that the government of this country hath not a power to grant the catholic claims, while it withholds those of the protestant nonconformist? Or what power on earth can compel the parliament of the United Empire to advance one step further in the progress of amelioration than it shall itself, in its own discretion, judge to be expedient. We desire, and we expect, in due time, complete emancipation from all religious restrictions and legal disabilities. But we desire it in the use of legal methods: and we expect it from the growing wisdom and moderation of our country-

men. From the hand of "sedition, of privy conspiracy, and rebellion," we would disdain to accept the boon. Our holy cause needeth not, and forbids the use of any other weapons than those of sound reason and liberal policy.

Thirdly, it is further alledged, that, if the catholics succeed, the *existing establishment will be endangered:* for that the catholics are from principle *persecutors,* and that they would feel it as a duty to exert themselves to the utmost to destroy the national church, and to establish the catholic religion in its room.

Some persons talk as if they believed, that if the catholic claims were granted, and the catholics made eligible to public offices, every place in the army, in the senate, in the courts of law and justice, and even the throne itself, would speedily be filled with them: and that, like the frogs in Egypt, they would penetrate into the cabinet, and swarm in the palaces and the bed-chambers of Pharoah. And their haunted imaginations immediately see Smithfield in a blaze, and pastors and bishops chained to the stake.

The truth is, that if the prayer of the catholic petition were to be granted to the utmost extent, the only perceptible consequence would be, that certain disabilities and disqualifications would be removed, and a public stigma would be taken off from a respectable body of men, who had done nothing to forfeit their political

birthright. But, as I have before observed, the accession of real power would be trivial and indiscernible, and the wheels of government would move on in the same track, and with the same regularity, as before? Is any Englishman so faint-hearted as to apprehend, that two hundred thousand catholics*, though every one of them should be possessed with the malignity of a Gardiner, and the fury of a Bonner, could wrest the reins of government out of the hands of ten millions of protestants, and again deluge the island with blood? And even in Ireland, where the proportion of catholics is far more considerable, their political power would not be sensibly increased.

But, for argument's sake, let it be admitted, that the catholics may become possessed of the powers of government. Let us, by an effort of imagination, figure to ourselves, that such is the great and universally acknowledged preeminence of catholic talent and catholic merit, that a protestant sovereign shall admit none but catholics into his cabinet, and that a protestant people shall send none but catholic representatives to parliament, does it follow, that, in the present age, catholics would persecute because their ancestors did?

That catholics were once persecutors, cruel, sanguinary persecutors of the reformed church.

* The supposed number of catholics in England.

is too surely attested by the flames of Smithfield, by the wars of the Low Countries, by the massacre of Paris, by the revocation of the edict of Nantes, and, most of all, by the inhuman, infernal tribunal of the Inquisition.

But are protestants themselves clear in this matter? Is there any sect among them, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Calvinists, Arminians, Socinians, nay, even Quakers themselves, the most peaceful, the most innocent of all sects, which, if it were arraigned at the bar of strict, impartial justice, could confidently appeal to history, and plead, Not guilty?

I grant, with pleasure, that the annals of protestant persecution are not so deeply stained with blood as those of the catholic church. And I lament to see that there are some among us, who, not making sufficient allowance for the ignorance and barbarous spirit of the times, and the imperfection of human nature, are busied in dragging forth some of the most eminent of the reformers, and holding them up to public infamy for acts of violence, which all now agree to condemn, but which, in an age just emerging from the grossest intellectual and moral darkness, were generally approved. I lament to see those Christian heroes, to whose stupendous efforts we are indebted for all the light and liberty we now enjoy, the revered names of Soci-

nus and Calvin, of Melancthon and Beza, of Ridley and of Cranmer, the venerable, the pious, the mild, and gentle Cranmer, whom to injure was to secure his friendship, and whose frailties and infirmities were surely expiated by his heroic martyrdom, to see these names degraded to a level with a Gardiner, a Bonner, and other infernal fiends, who thirsted for human blood, and whose memories are devoted to the execration of mankind.

But the season of darkness is past. And I am persuaded that the catholic of modern times looks back with as much horror and detestation to those scenes of blood as the protestant, and would be equally unwilling to repeat them. They were the transactions of an ignorant and ferocious age, never more to return. And the catholics of this country having themselves been sufferers for more than a century under the iron rod of persecution, they know the heart of a stranger, they see and feel the injustice and cruelty of inflicting pains and penalties for the sake of conscience, and are no doubt radically cured of a persecuting spirit.

And that the spirit of intolerance is greatly on the decline, if not altogether banished from the catholic communion, is evident, not merely from the professions of those who are destitute of political power, and suffering under civil privations, but from the practice of governments in those

countries where the catholic religion is triumphant. In no nation of Europe are princes restrained by law from availing themselves of the talents and services of protestants, in any department of state, civil or military. In Hungary, in Prussia, and through the empire of France, catholics and protestants are upon an equal footing, and even in Spain the Inquisition is abolished.

Finally, it is alledged that all nonconformists, catholic and protestant, must be from principle, and in their hearts, *hostile* to the established religion, and from interest desirous to pull it down, and to build up their own communion upon its ruins. The prosperity, therefore, and even the safety of the established church, requires that they should be deprived of political power.

This is a very plausible and most imposing argument: and with many it has more weight than all the rest. But I hesitate not to assert, that it is an argument which will not bear examination, that it is a gross and dangerous paralogism, and that to act upon it is really to bring the established religion into that very crisis, which it is so desirable to avoid.

The settlement of ample revenues, and the investment of the ministers of an establishment with high rank and dignity, is amply sufficient for the support of a national religion. And the church of England, protected by the laws, the

customs, the opulence, and the fashion of the country, needs not, for her own security, to grasp at the monopoly of political power. She may be well content to share it in due proportion with the rest of the community.

This, she may be assured, is the decided judgement of all who are not within the pale of her communion: and who see no reason why they should be laid under the bar of a political proscription. And it may behove churchmen to recollect, that these are in number more than half of the population of the United Empire.

The safety of the established communion depends, in a considerable degree, upon the division of the nonconformist interest. No sect, single-handed, is equal to cope with the national church, though all united might, if that were their object, accomplish her downfal.

But so discordant are they in principle, and so hostile to each other in doctrine and in spirit, that nothing can possibly unite them, nothing can induce them to act in concert, but some great, common, and oppressive grievance. Such is the universal denial of their proper share of political influence; laying the whole body indiscriminately under one general sentence of degradation and disgrace.

Remove this single impediment, efface this general stigma, grant the nonconformists their

birthright, as the natives of a free country, their eligibility to political office and power, and the bond of union is burst asunder. A mutual repulsion immediately takes place. And the mass, which, in a state of compression and confinement, threatened an explosion which might endanger the constitution both of church and state, when thus set at liberty, evaporates into air, and becomes perfectly impotent and harmless.

Had revolutionary France been left to herself, she would have been torn to pieces by contending factions, and France would for many years have been blotted out of the map of Europe. But the impolitic combination of the surrounding states to crush the nascent republic, compelled the contending parties to suspend their domestic broils, and to concentrate their united force to resist in mass the common enemy. The sad consequences of this compulsory union are deeply felt by prostrate Europe to the present hour: and will be recollected with horror for centuries to come.

Let England take the salutary warning. If I were a member of the established communion, zealous for its security, its dignity, and its prosperity, most adverse to the increase of the nonconformist interest, and apprehensive of the numbers, the influence, the zeal, and the activity of the sectaries, I would say, give the nonconformists, both catholic and protestant, all they ask. Let them have no common grievance, no

general bond of union. Then you may bid defiance to every attempt to shake the established church. For if one sect seeks your ruin, twenty will for that very reason court your alliance, and proffer their support. By division, you will reign secure.

Thus every party will be pleased and satisfied. All just complaint will be removed. The established church will be safe. The nonconformists will enjoy their political rights. And the government of the country will have the power to select from all classes of its subjects, without distinction, those to whom it may best confide the safety and the prosperity of the empire. Religious animosity, that bane of national happiness, will cease. Every species, and every form of persecution, will be abolished. Theological discussion will be conducted with good temper and decorum. The spirit of the Christian religion will prevail as the knowledge of its genuine principles becomes more extended. And, under the blessing of Divine Providence, which measures so wise, liberal, and salutary, are calculated to secure, the United Empire will tower above its surrounding and less fortunate neighbours, will continue to bid a proud defiance to its envious and malignant enemies, and will stand gloriously preeminent in knowledge, in freedom, in virtue, and in happiness.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

N° I.

CHARLES BUTLER, Esq., in his late Address to the Protestants of Great Britain and Ireland, sect. xiv, has given the following admirable summary of the articles in which all Christians are agreed.

"1. That there is ONE GOD. 2. That he is a Being of infinite perfection. 3. That he directs all things by his providence. 4. That it is our duty to love God with all our hearts. 5. That it is our duty to repent of our sins. 6. That God pardons the truly penitent. 7. That there is a future state of rewards and punishments, where all mankind shall be judged according to their works. 8. That God sent his Son into the world, to be its saviour, the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. 9. That he is the true Messiah. 10. That he worked miracles, suffered, died, and rose again, as is related in the four gospels. 11. That he will hereafter make a second appearance on the earth, raise all mankind from the dead, judge the world in righteousness, bestow eternal life on the virtuous, and punish the workers of iniquity."

To this truly catholic and apostolic creed, this creed of the universal church, *quod semper*, *quod ubique*, *quod ab omnibus*, the author of the discourse most readily declares

his unfeigned and unequivocal assent and consent. In his estimation, it contains pure Christianity, the whole of pure Christianity, and nothing but pure Christianity. It is a doctrine most worthy of God to communicate, and most important for man to receive. In comparison with these momentous truths, what are all those curious speculations upon which Christians in all ages have differed! and for which theologues have wrangled, bigots have persecuted, and martyrs have suffered? They are the wood, the stubble, and the rubbish, which having been erected upon this foundation of gold and gems, must all perish in the day when every man's work will be tried with fire.

The respectable author of the address expresses his hope of a re-union of the catholic and protestant churches, when they will allow themselves calmly to revise, and clearly to express the tenets on which they differ. The author of the discourse likewise, but in a different way, entertains no doubtful expectation, that the time will come when theological differences will cease. He believes, that, as knowledge of all kinds, physical and moral, advances, and as freedom of enquiry and discussion are encouraged, all the additions of human ignorance to the pure doctrine of Christ will by degrees be detected and discarded. And, in the mean time, it surely becomes those who agree in the essential and infinitely important points stated above, to differ on other subjects with meekness and charity, and to allow to all the free exercise of that unalienable right of private judgement which every one justly claims for himself.

N° II.

The Oath and Declaration prescribed by the British Parliament of the 31st of his present Majesty, and which is taken by all English Catholics.

"I *A. B.* do hereby declare, That I do profess the "Roman Catholic Religion.

"I *A. B.* do sincerely promise and swear, That I will "be faithful, and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty "King George the Third, and him will defend to the "utmost of my power against all conspiracies and at- "tempts whatsoever that shall be made against his Person, "Crown, or Dignity: And I will do my utmost endea- "vour to disclose and make known to His Majesty, his "Heirs and Successors, all Treasons and Traiterous Con- "spiracies, which may be formed against him or them: "And I do faithfully promise to maintain, support, and "defend, to the utmost of my power, the Succession of "the crown; which Succession, by an Act, intituled, 'An "Act for the further Limitation of the Crown, and better "securing the Rights and Liberties of the Subject,' is, "and stands limited to the Princess Sophia, Electress and "Duchess Dowager of Hanover, and the Heirs of her "Body, being Protestants; hereby utterly renouncing and "abjuring any obedience or allegiance unto any other "person claiming or pretending a right to the Crown of "these Realms. And I do swear, That I do reject and "detest as an unchristian and impious position, that it "is lawful to Murder or Destroy any person or persons "whatsoever, for, or under pretence of, their being He- "retics or Infidels; and also that unchristian and im-

" pious Principle, that faith is not to be kept with Here-
" tics or Infidels: And I further declare, that it is not an
" Article of my Faith; and that I do renounce, reject,
" and abjure the Opinion, that Princes excommunicated
" by the Pope and Council, or any authority of the See
" of Rome, or by any authority whatsoever, may be de-
" posed or murdered by their Subjects or any person
" whatsoever: And I do promise, that I will not hold,
" maintain, or abet any such Opinion, or any other Opi-
" nions contrary to what is expressed in this Declaration:
" And I do declare, that I do not believe that the Pope
" of Rome, or any other foreign Prince, Prelate, State,
" or Potentate, hath, or ought to have, any temporal or
" civil jurisdiction, power, superiority, or pre-eminence,
" directly or indirectly, within this realm: And I do so-
" lemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and
" declare, that I do make this Declaration, and every
" part thereof, in the plain and ordinary sense of the
" words of this Oath, without any Evasion, Equivoca-
" tion, or Mental Reservation whatever, and without any
" dispensation already granted by the Pope, or any au-
" thority of the See of Rome, or any person whatever,
" and without thinking that I am, or can be, acquitted
" before God or man, or absolved of this Declaration, or
" any part thereof, although the Pope, or any other
" person or authority whatsoever, shall dispense with, or
" annul the same, or declare that it was null or void. So
" help me God."

The Oath and Declaration prescribed by the Irish Act of the 33d of His present Majesty, and is taken by all Irish Roman Catholics, wishing to entitle themselves to the benefit of that Act.

"I *A. B.* do hereby declare, That I do profess the "Roman Catholic Religion.

"I *A. B.* do swear, That I do abjure, condemn, and "detest, as unchristian and impious, the principle that "it is lawful to murder, destroy, or any ways injure any "persons whatsoever, for or under the pretence of being "a Heretic: And I do declare, solemnly before God, "that I believe, that no act in itself unjust, immoral, "or wicked, can ever be justified or excused, by or "under pretence or colour that it was done either for "the good of the church, or in obedience to any "ecclesiastical power whatsoever: I also declare, that "it is not an Article of the Catholic Faith, neither am "I thereby required to believe or profess, that the Pope "is infallible, or that I am bound to obey any order, in "its own nature immoral, though the Pope, or any "ecclesiastical power, should issue or direct such order: "but, on the contrary, I hold, that it would be sinful in "me to pay any respect or obedience thereto: I further "declare, that I do not believe, that any sin whatever "committed by me, can be forgiven, at the mere will "of any Pope, or any Priest, or of any person or persons "whatsoever, but that sincere sorrow for past sins, a firm "and sincere resolution to avoid future guilt, and to "atone to God, are previous and indispensable requisites "to establish a well-founded expectation of forgiveness, "and that any person who receives absolution without "these previous requisites, so far from obtaining thereby

" any remission of his sins, incurs the additional guilt of " violating a Sacrament: And I do swear, that I will de- " fend, to the uttermost of my power, the Settlement " and Arrangement of Property in this Country, as es- " tablished by the Laws now in being: I do hereby " disclaim, disavow, and solemnly abjure any intention to " subvert the present Church Establishment, for the pur- " pose of substituting a Catholic Establishment in its " stead: And I do solemnly swear, that I will not exercise " any privilege to which I am or may become entitled, " to disturb and weaken the Protestant Religion and Pro- " testant Government in this Kingdom.

" So help me God."

These oaths, which the Catholics of the two countries are required to take, were drawn up with the utmost care, by men of consummate abilities and great legal knowledge: no candid person, who reads them with attention, can hesitate to allow that they are completely satisfactory; and that they contain every security consistent with Catholic principle, which the most apprehensive mind could suggest.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE AND THE REFORMATION:

THE SUBSTANCE

OF

THREE SERMONS,

PREACHED AT THE

NEW GRAVEL-PIT MEETING HOUSE, HACKNEY,

ON SUNDAY MORNINGS,

OCTOBER 4th, 11th, AND 18th, 1835,

IN CELEBRATION OF THE

THIRD CENTENARY

OF THE PRINTING OF THE FIRST ENTIRE VERSION IN ENGLISH OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

By ROBERT ASPLAND,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

ROWLAND HUNTER, 72, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

1835.

PRINTED BY G. SMALLFIELD, HACKNEY.

PREFACE.

The following Discourse, being, as the Title-page explains, the Substance of Three Sermons, is printed at the unanimous request of the Congregation assembling at the New Gravel-Pit Meeting-house, and, according to their accustomed liberality, at their sole charge. To them it is now presented by their affectionate Pastor, with feelings of gratitude, and ardent wishes and prayers for their welfare, temporal and eternal.

The Discourse is printed as one, but distributed, as the reader will perceive, into Three Parts.

A series of Notes is appended to the Discourse, containing authorities for some of the statements.

The Preacher has expressed his own opinions strongly and fearlessly. The great and sacred cause of Christian Reform appeared to him to require this

faithfulness; and he commits to the press, under a sense of duty, what he felt impelled by the same obligation to deliver from the pulpit. He has not spared either Catholic or Protestant violations of religious liberty; but he can say with a good conscience, that he is in charity and Christian unity with all, whether Protestants or Catholics, who both follow and are willing that others should follow religion, according to the apostolic rule, of being "fully persuaded in their own mind." With bigots and oppressors of conscience in any church, he is free to confess, that he has no sympathy; and as he has never expected their approbation, so he fears not their censure.

SUBSTANCE OF THREE SERMONS.

Nehemiah viii. 8:

So they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

On this morning, many of our Christian Protestant brethren have agreed to celebrate the Third Centenary of the completion of the first translation of the entire Bible into English. Happy to unite with them, I have read these words as part of a passage describing a somewhat analogous case in the history of the Jewish people. This case I shall briefly explain; after which I propose to refer historically to the auspicious event of the translation of the Bible into our vernacular tongue, and to describe the Reformation which partly consisted in, and was helped on and confirmed by, this one measure; and then I shall attempt to shew where and why the Reformation was stopped, what portion of evil has been mingled with the good of this great historical epoch, what remains to be done for the complete restoration of pure Christianity, and what

are the duties of enlightened Christians in the present acknowledged crisis of our Religion.

Such is my purpose and plan. In the endeavour to execute it, I have in view only the diffusion of correct knowledge on the history and doctrine of the Scriptures, and the promotion of Divine Truth, and of such further reform as is required to give to Divine Truth all its natural beneficial influence.

One thing I wish above all to premise, and that is, that I shall not make use of the occasion to disparage, much less revile, the members of any church, ancient or modern, reformed or unreformed. Should the historical facts that may be stated seem to reflect upon any party, the disadvantage to them is not of my causing. To skreen persons and sects, it is not permitted to us to suppress important truth. At the same time, allowances should be made for those whom we cannot praise or perhaps vindicate; and it is the bounden duty of all Christians that engage in celebrations like this, to be supremely careful that they do not encourage the spirit of intolerance towards any of their fellow-christians, and much more that they do not infuse into religious discussion the bitterness of political faction. If there be any that observe this day with a view to irritate and degrade some class or denomination of their fellow-countrymen, we are no party to such a design; we disavow it, and proclaim it unchristian and a direct violation of the great principle of Christian liberty, on which alone we can justify the Reformation, and which alone, let me add, has made it a blessing to the world.

To return to the text:—a part of the Jews were now

returned to Jerusalem from Babylon after the seventy years' captivity, being released from hard bondage by Cyrus, whom their own prophets had long and clearly predicted, and by name, as their deliverer. As soon as they had taken measures for their safety, by rebuilding the walls of the city, amidst the annoyance of watchful enemies, they proceeded to re-establish their religion. This was necessary, as the knowledge of the law of Moses appears to have been in a great measure lost in the captivity. There were two preceding eras in the reigns of Jehoshaphat and Josiah in which the law of the Lord is described as being recovered after having been lost or forgotten; a singular fact, which suggests thoughts and inquiries of no little difficulty.*

Ezra, one of the leaders of the people on their return, was both a priest and a scribe, or writer and expounder of the law. In one of the apocryphal books, in which he is called Esdras, it is represented that all the volumes of Scripture were now lost, and that he was directed and empowered by the Spirit of God to re-write the whole of them;† but this book is admitted by both Roman Catholic and Protestant critics to be a fiction, from the pen of some Hebrew, ages after Ezra's time.

The period to which the text refers was the commencement of the feast of Tabernacles, when it had been commanded in the book of Deuteronomy (xxxi. 10) that the law should be read publicly every seventh year. In the revival of their religious zeal, the returned cap-

* 2 Chron. xvii. 7—9; 2 Kings xxii. 8—11.

† 2 Esdras xiv. 21, 22.

tives required in a body that the command should be obeyed. With willing compliance, Ezra, assisted by the Levites, brought the law before the congregation, which it is carefully explained consisted of both men and women, i. e. (as is also expressly stated) all that could understand. The opening of the solemn service is pictured in a lively manner: "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it,-all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground." (Vers. 5, 6.) The worship was rational, sincere and reverential, and was no doubt accepted. Various names are then given of men of authority who, with "the Levites, caused the people to understand the reading." They not only read, but expounded the law, and it has been thought that they translated what they read into the Chaldee tongue, then spoken by the Jews, and delivered their discourses upon scripture in the same language. The conjecture derives some countenance from the well-known peculiarity of part of the book of Ezra (from the eighth verse of the fourth chapter to the nineteenth verse of the sixth chapter, and from the beginning of the seventh chapter to the twenty-seventh verse,) having come down to us in the Chaldee.

The people were affected even to weeping and mourning by the recovery of their sacred writings. But Ezra and Nehemiah checked their tears, and reminded them that the feast was designed for rejoicing and for hospitality, and especially for charity to the

poor; in their own expressive words, "the joy of the Lord was their strength."

The feast lasted seven days, during the whole of which the law continued to be read and expounded, and it being discovered that Moses had commanded them to dwell in booths during the feast, they proceeded to obey, renewing a custom which, strange as it may seem, the historian states to have been lost from the time of Joshua, i. e. for the space of one thousand years:* "So the people went forth and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun, unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness." (Vers. 16, 17.)

You have here the history of the beginning of the Jewish Reformation. It was cause and effect with regard to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; it led to their recovery, and it was supported by their authority. The sacred volumes acquired their due influence by being translated and explained. They were laid open to all the people,—the reformers reading distinctly, giving the sense and causing every one to understand the reading. Cheerful obedience was the result of knowledge. The people hastened to discharge both their social and pious duties. They had arrived at an era in their religious history: the Scriptures,

* This was Mede's interpretation, but see Patrick in loc.

now made their own, by translation and exposition, were never after lost. Synagogues or meeting-houses were established wherever there was a company of Jews to the number of ten, and in these the writings of Moses and the prophets were read every sabbath and at the fasts and festivals, accompanied by versions and explanatory discourses. There were translations of and commentaries upon the Old Testament in all the widely-used languages of the civilized world, some of which, of great authority, are still extant. None of the learned of the East or West could be ignorant, except willingly, of the history and doctrine of these sacred books. This diffusion of revealed knowledge prepared the way for the Messiah; it led many of the Hebrews to look and wait for "the consolation of Israel," and it instructed no small number of pious Heathens to embrace the doctrine of a Saviour, "a light to lighten the Gentiles."

The Jewish Synagogue was the model of the early Christian Church,—the same officers, the same customs, nearly the same prayers, and, at first, the same Scriptures. The Christian sacred books, as they successively appeared, were introduced into the Churches founded by the apostles and evangelists, and gradually made their way into others. For countries not accustomed to the languages in which the Gospels and Epistles were originally written, versions were soon and carefully prepared. These, extending in their various dates throughout several of the earliest centuries of the Christian era, are invaluable, inasmuch as they fix the original reading and even sense of the Christian Scriptures: and it is observable

that where they vary from our present received text, the variation is almost uniformly in favour of the reading which best accords with the simplest and purest form of Divine Truth.

In the course of time, the Roman Church gained the ascendancy, and the Pagan Temple, rather than the Jewish Synagogue, became the model of Christian worship and other observances. The metropolitan church vied in splendour with the metropolitan city, and aspired to the same universal dominion. One of the means not unwisely adopted in this view, looking at it in the light of worldly policy, was confining the offices of religion, public and private, to one language, that is, the Roman, which, as a written language, was fast gaining upon the Greek in universality. To the same end, the Scriptures sanctioned by the papal authority were the Latin version called the Vulgate, ascribed to St. Jerome,—a work venerable not only for its antiquity, but also for its general conformity to the original, and interesting in the highest degree as having had great influence over the minds of all the Christians in Europe who were in the class of educated persons, for more than thirteen centuries.

It would be scarcely correct to say that the Church of Rome prohibited the reading of the Scriptures—portions of the Psalms, Gospels and Epistles were used in the daily service of the Church. The authorized Latin version was open to all, and they were a vast number, that could read that language. The restriction (at first, at least,) regarded new versions circulated without ecclesiastical authority. And even this was limited, for the northern nations of Europe

were bound to the See of Rome by loose ties, and occasionally asserted their religious freedom. The Goths had their own Scriptures in their own tongue. The Saxons early manifested a thirst for sacred literature. We no sooner hear of their conversion to Christianity, than of their translating portions at least of the Bible into the Saxon tongue. Towards the beginning of the eighth century, the Psalter and the Gospels, some say all the books of the Bible, were translated into Anglo-Saxon by the venerable Bede, who is related to have finished the last chapter of the Gospels as he expired. Our Alfred directed the Bible to be translated for the people, himself undertaking the Book of Psalms, a noble work, in which he was interrupted only by death. The history of English sacred literature shews, indeed, that new translations of the Scriptures were continually made, at intervals when the rapidly growing changes in our language rendered the preceding works of this kind unintelligible or obscure to the people.* Wickliffe, in the fourteenth century, made a version of the New Testament, (some say of the whole Bible, including the apocryphal books,) which, though a copy of it was burnt with his bones by decree of the Council of Constance, in 1415, was preserved and has come down to our times, and was, no doubt, one of the means of exciting in this kingdom the spirit of reformation.

The knowledge of this tendency of the Scriptures in the mother-tongue raised a fierce opposition to their circulation on the part of the priesthood. In the year 1390, during the reign of Richard II., a Bill was

* Note I.

brought into the House of Lords to prohibit the use of English Bibles, but being opposed and reprobated by John, Duke of Lancaster, was rejected: the noble-minded Prince is said to have exclaimed on this occasion, "We will not be the dregs of all, seeing other nations have the law of God, which is the law of *our* faith, written in their own language."

From this time till the era of the Reformation (properly so called) the use of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue was accounted one of the marks of heresy, and was one of the practices against which persecution was directed; and persecution was then a "fiery trial."

The invention of printing was taken advantage of from the beginning as the means of circulating the Scriptures in English, more cheaply, more secretly and more widely. The first printed portion of the Scriptures was Tyndal's New Testament, executed at Hamburg or Antwerp, in 1526. This was dispersed at London and Oxford. Cardinal Wolsey and the Bishops published prohibitions and injunctions against it as false and heretical. The otherwise good and great Sir Thomas More united with Tonstal, Bishop of London, in vehement opposition to it, and, with a folly into which wise men sometimes run when they are heated by passion, these statesmen bought up nearly the whole impression and burnt it at St. Paul's Cross, the effect of which was, that the speedy sale of the whole edition enabled Tyndal to carry on his further design with regard to the rest of the Bible. This intrepid Reformer persevered in his pious and patriotic labours for some years, until, at the instigation of

Henry VIII., of execrable memory, who was incensed against him on account of the freedom with which, in the prefaces to his translations, he had animadverted upon the bishops and clergy, he was seized in Flanders, An. 1536, and was strangled, and his body was afterwards burnt. He died praying with repeated earnestness, that God would open the eyes of the King of England.*

Whilst Tyndal was under persecution, the great work upon which his heart was set was going on. Miles Coverdale, who had been associated with him in his pious labours, a man of exemplary virtue, deep knowledge of the Scriptures and habitual piety, was prompted by his own zeal and encouraged by authority to put forth a translation of the whole Bible. It was printed, some have supposed, from the types employed, at Zurich, A. D. 1535, and is stated on the last page to have been finished the 4th day of October. It was a folio volume and dedicated to the King. It has great merit as a translation, but is chiefly memorable as the first translation of the whole Bible *printed* in our language, and the first English Bible allowed by Royal authority to be publicly sold and freely read. The venerable Translator was, again and again, an exile for the sake of faith and good conscience, and was much respected and beloved by the Protestants of Germany and the Low Countries, amongst whom he exercised his ministry. On the accession of Edward VI. to the throne, he was appointed to the See of Exeter. He was ejected from this bishopric in the following melancholy reign, and committed to prison,

* Note II.

but on the mediation of the King of Denmark, with whom he had become acquainted on his former residence on the Continent, was allowed to retire into banishment. On the accession of Elizabeth and the restoration of an imperfect Protestantism, he returned to his native land. He had moved on in reform; England, or at least the Queen and courtiers and bishops, had gone backward; and as he could not conform to what he regarded as superstition, he was not deemed worthy of again wearing the mitre. He was henceforward neglected—till, when he was both old and poor, Grindal, Bishop of London, gave him the small living of St. Magnus, at the foot of London Bridge. Here he exercised his ministry for a short time by connivance, but refusing entire conformity and being much followed by the Puritans, with whom we must in historic justice class him, and of whom, distinguished as they were for intellectual attainments and many Christian virtues, he was one of the most shining lights, he drew on him the displeasure of the higher powers and was set aside a little before his death, which took place in 1568, when he was eighty-one years of age. Though attempted to be disgraced by the dispensers of worldly honour, he has left a name ever to be revered, and in his translation of the Bible has established a monument to his pious fame more sacred and more durable than any which was ever raised by episcopal favour or princely patronage.*

Henry the Eighth was soon alarmed at the consequences of setting free the English Bible, and, at the instance of the bishops, ordered, "that the false trans-

* Note III.

lation of Tyndal, as they called it, should not be uttered either by printer or bookseller; and that no annotations or preambles should be in Bibles or New Testaments. And from henceforth," says a careful ecclesiastical annalist,* "the Bible was stopped during the remainder of King Henry's reign." But from this period, the English Bible was, with a few interruptions, established by authority. Several new versions and many editions of old ones appeared, until, in the reign of James I., the present received translation was made by a Royal commission of fifty-four men of the greatest repute for learning, in this country, at that day, amongst those at least that were not suspected of any puritanic or heretical leaning. It was begun in 1607, was finished in about three years, and was first given to the world in 1611, in folio, in black letter. The translators were obliged to proceed upon a faulty text, in both Hebrew and Greek, and were moreover fettered by the Rules laid down for them by the King, who feared the translation might serve the rising sect of the Puritans; but the work is creditable to the compilers, honourable to the age in which it was composed, and, taken upon the whole, is the standard book of the English language, when the language was approaching to perfection.

The Scriptures being thus given freely to the British nation, the English Catholics felt the necessity of a version of their own; and accordingly, in 1582, they put forth an English New Testament at Rheims, and in 1609, an English Old Testament at Douay, both from the Latin Vulgate with Annotations. It is ge-

* Strype, Mem. B. i. Ch. xxi.

nerally understood, and I believe not contradicted, that the Catholics, though they have these books in their possession, are not supposed to read them without the permission of their confessors. But this permission would appear to be easily obtained or generally evaded, from the vast number of English Catholic Bibles issued annually in Ireland. One respectable Irish Catholic Bishop has publicly claimed the merit of distributing more Bibles than any other of his countrymen, Catholic or Protestant.*

To the circulation of the Scriptures in English we undoubtedly owe the early and wide spread of the principle of the Reformation in Great Britain, and the firm hold which it has taken of the minds of our countrymen. That they have generally understood and acted consistently with that principle, is not necessary to be proved for the establishment of our position. The truth of it is confirmed by the ecclesiastical history of other countries where the Reformation took earliest and deepest root, as the northern parts of Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark and Sweden, which were severally the countries where the Bible was first translated into the mother-tongue, and in that tongue most widely circulated.

There always was real virtue and true piety in Christendom, but for ages the mass of the people was enveloped in dark ignorance, and was under the absolute power of an almost equally ignorant and less virtuous and less pious priesthood. The Book of Life was amongst them, but it was sealed up, not merely as it was in a dead language, but through their want of

* Note IV.

knowledge even of the letters of the alphabet. The contemplation of such gross darkness affects the mind at once with pity and with fear. The scene fulfils the Christian prophet's vision. "And I saw on the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." (Rev. v. 1—4.) And may we not consider the remainder of the vision, relating to Him who, on account of his moral strength and courage and his predestined triumph, is styled "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah," also fulfilled when the revival of letters, followed and assisted by the invention of printing, unlocked all the sealed fountains of knowledge, and the spirit of the Restorer of the nations, animating the breasts of the Reformers, enabled and impelled them to lay before the multitude the long-hidden treasures of divine truth? "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." (Ver. 5.)

Various causes combined their influence to awaken and put in motion the nations of Europe at the time of the Reformation, constituting one of those critical epochs when mankind in large masses are impelled in one direction, that of reform and improve-

ment. The present period, if I err not greatly, is another such crisis or turning-point in history, when great events must follow, and when, unless the leaders of the public mind rush out of the course plainly marked for them by Divine Providence, and lead the multitude into extravagant and dangerous experiments, those events may be reckoned upon as full of promise for the human race.

But amongst the causes which acted upon the people with greatest power in the sixteenth century, few would hesitate to place in the first rank the translation and circulation of the Scriptures. The people had been, as they believed, deceived and injured; there was now put into their hands the means of setting themselves right and obtaining redress. They had been helpless; they were supplied with a new and untried power, of which they could not define the great results. The stream of knowledge was let flow amongst them, and they panted for the means of drawing to their use the living waters. They sought education, — that obtained, they wanted more and more instruction. The reader of the Bible for himself was conscious of a higher rank than he had before sustained. Proclaimed by public opinion the judge of its momentous contents, he felt his dignity increase with his responsibility. The more that the minds of men were simultaneously occupied with the new discovery of the records of salvation, the more truth and the more beauty were brought to light. The sacred volume was of infinite interest to every man; first curiosity and then conscience was aroused;—here was laid down the way of salvation, the path of moral and

religious duty. The heavens were opened to the dwellers upon earth; Jesus Christ was heard in his own word, that word "life and spirit"; and the Almighty Father was seen and hailed in the glory of his everlasting goodness.

It is, I conceive, no controversial challenge, but an undisputed fact, that where the Scriptures have been thrown open to the people, and they have been instructed and attracted to read and understand them, the standard of morals has gradually risen. Can it be by accident that the countries of which this is one of the features, have been always foremost in domestic virtue, social charity, and the philanthropic efforts by which the great evils of ignorance and vice, slavery and war, are combated and overcome? The moral beauty of Christianity can be seen only in all its lines and features in the New Testament, in the precepts and lives of its founders, the precepts and the life especially of Jesus Christ; and the moral power of our religion cannot operate with all its gracious influence except upon minds that are constantly subject to the motives which the Scriptures incessantly apply. In all other cases, the Gospel acts indirectly, and, therefore, with weakened influence upon the mind and heart of the believer.

A seeming high regard for the Scriptures and an eager zeal for their distribution may indeed be united with spiritual pride and intolerance, but in this unnatural connexion of feelings there must be great ignorance and great self-deception. The scheme of the Bible Society was a noble instance of homage to the spirit of the Bible on the part of the various sects who, on so

many other occasions, have appeared not to "know what manner of spirit they are of"; and if in a few instances the actors in this society have been willing to trespass upon what I will call not its liberal but its just principle of leaving every man to put his own interpretation upon the sacred volume, without being called in question by his neighbour, let it be remembered to the honour of the age, that the principle itself has never been denied or revoked, that every attempt to overthrow it, in order to open a way to exclusion, has been successfully withstood, and that the party that has tried to make division, for the sake of intolerance, has met with little or no countenance from public opinion.*

While I thus assert the happy moral influence of the free use of the Scriptures in their own tongue by the people, I am far from meaning to question the virtue or to disparage the character of our Catholic brethren, who have not generally asserted for themselves the same degree of freedom. Other good influences operate amongst them. Their own version of scripture, which is becoming daily more familiar to them, contains the same religious doctrine and the same morality as ours. And there is in the present day a sort of acknowledged standard of morals in a Christian country, to which all its inhabitants, not excepted by degrading ignorance or daring profligacy, agree to conform; nay, a standard for the civilized world, which all nations, such is the power of public opinion! admit and revere. The Christians that do not follow the Reformation may be secretly

* Note V.

under its influence, as the Mahometans may, unknown to themselves, be the better for the Christianity which lives and breathes around them.

Great, however, as has been the good produced by the free use and enjoyment of the Scriptures, that good might have been increased, but for causes originating in public authority and private opinion. In this statement, I refer principally to our own country.

There are advantages, but there are also disadvantages in a publicly authorized version of the Bible. Such a version acquires sanctity by age; it facilitates scriptural discussion; and the faithfulness of its successive editions may be generally relied on. But, on the other hand, the continued use and veneration of a version from father to son, is apt to lead the unlearned reader to regard it as the original, from whose words there is no appeal; if mistakes and errors were at the first introduced, there is danger of their being continued, after they are detected, from the fixedness of that which is established by the supreme power; and the work may be still imposed upon the nation, although the progress of learning and the success of erudite inquiry may have discovered a text of the original languages varying in some important passages, and more consistent with the growing reason of the world.

For a long time the most eminent of our scholars and divines have been calling out for a revision of the authorized translation, which with all its great merits, has, in the course of two hundred years, become in some places obsolete, in others discordant with the public taste, and in others at variance with the best

manuscripts and most ancient versions, and so far is an unfaithful representation of what it acknowledges to be the word of God. But the call has been in vain, notwithstanding our possessing the wealthiest established church and the two most richly endowed seats of learning in Christendom. Individuals have endeavoured to supply the defect without success. Private cannot set aside public authority. The attempt is always unpopular. The people are not yet prepared to receive sacred learning from unaccredited hands, and the authorities of the State are too much occupied with temporal affairs, or too fast bound to the Church, whose heads fear any change, or too apprehensive of exciting religious contests amongst the multitude, to make any serious attempt to procure a translation which should shew, as in a mirror, the genuine originals of scripture.*

In some things, King James's, the present authorized translation, is degenerate, as compared with Tyndal's and Coverdale's. Several passages which these earliest versions rendered agreeably to the best MSS., are in our present version rendered conformably to popular prejudice, or rather ecclesiastical dictation. One passage illustrates our meaning. The Three-Witnesses' Text, as 1 John v. 7, 8 is termed, was at the time of the Reformation discovered by Erasmus and others to be at least of doubtful authority: the first English Reformers and Translators, honest as well as brave, put it within brackets to mark its doubtfulness: in the century intervening between the earliest translation and that which is now authorized,

* Note VI.

viz. King James's, the researches of the learned had brought up new probabilities of its spuriousness; and yet the Royal Translators removed the marks of doubtfulness and restored the passage to the text of scripture, where it has stood two hundred years, notwithstanding accumulating evidence of its being an interpolation, and during all this time it has been and is quoted, ignorantly by the multitude, unblushingly by many educated teachers, in support of the yet partially reformed doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Divine nature.*

In truth, the popular reverence of the Bible stands in the way of an improved translation, since any alteration, though it were only a restoration of what an apostle actually wrote, would be proclaimed, and possibly by some from whom better conduct might be expected, a mutilation or corruption of the Divine Oracles.

Superstition has, among Christians, as it had previously amongst Jews, extended itself to the Scriptures, and interfered with their beneficial influence. The strange notion of the direct inspiration of every word,—which notion is not countenanced by the sacred writers, is virtually disclaimed by some of them, and is disproved by the variations of the different writers in relating the same fact,—has kept men from putting a rational interpretation upon holy writ, by leading them constantly in quest of mysteries, and has induced a secret persuasion of there being in the words of the Bible, independently of their sense, a sort of charm, and, moreover, of the meritoriousness in the

* Note VII.

sight of God of poring upon the sacred pages, irrespective of the temper of mind with which they are studied, and of their influence upon the affections and habits.

These are some and perhaps not inconsiderable deductions from the benefits to be ascribed to the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular tongues of Europe, and particularly that of our own country.

I am nevertheless anxious to impress upon your minds that, with all the imperfections of the authorized translation of the Scriptures, with all the negligence or mischievous interference of governments called Christian, and with all the inconsistencies of Protestants in general, the free use of the sacred writings in the popular versions has produced many blessings, and in particular by teaching and extending the reception of that highest truth which is involved in Charity. For Charity is not merely a sentiment or affection, as distinguished from a creed; it is the result of enlightened inquiry, the last attainment of a mind rising above "doubtful disputations" into the pure spirit of the Gospel. Doctrines are individual, local and temporary; the knowledge on which they rest "vanisheth away," with every accession of heavenly light; but charity, the love of God and man, which is the source of all piety and all social virtue, never faileth.

The new and startling appearances of bigotry in our own country, which we lament, are but the struggles of ignorance or temporal interest against the growing charity of the age,—a struggle between light and dark-

ness, the issue of which no one can doubt or dread. From the Reformation downward there has been a constant succession of enlightened minds and generous hearts,—the number increasing with every generation, —who have considered the gospel to be something more and better than a Creed—who, in proportion as they have studied it, have learned their own fallibility and the sacredness of the consciences of their fellow-christians—and who, while they have not been unmindful of the high claims of Truth, have tried and estimated Truth by its influence upon the virtue and the happiness of individuals, families and nations. An assemblage of such men, the representatives of all that is salutary and ennobling in Christianity, was recently held at Geneva, one of the cradles of the Reformation, and it was delightful to see the most eminent members of various Protestant churches, holding avowedly different symbols of faith, giving to each other the right hand of fellowship, agreeing to celebrate the real virtues of the Reformers, binding one another to observe and cultivate the one great principle of the Reformation, liberty of conscience in the interpretation of scripture, and hailing with united voice the approach of the period when the gospel will be an uniting and not a dividing faith, and when, under its blessed influence, all wise and good men, of whatever outward profession, will welcome each other as true disciples of Christ, and faithful servants of the Most High God.*

In such a frame of mind have I desired to celebrate, and to engage you, my Christian friends, to celebrate

* Note VIII.

with me, this day, so important in the annals of our Religion. We wish to honour the memory of those who laboured for us and into whose labours we are entered, who suffered for truth and conscience, and of whose sufferings and tears we are reaping the precious fruits. But we feel bound to magnify principles more than persons, and to value the Reformation according to its moral effects. We are assured that we most highly honour our fathers when we attempt to carry to perfection the good work which they began, but of necessity left incomplete. They, under Divine Providence, gave us the Scriptures, and we will shew that we prize the gift, by studying the word of life for ourselves, by promoting, according to our opportunities, the restoration of that word to its true reading and genuine sense, and above all by putting ourselves under the influence of its holy and heavenly spirit. And, as the last and best expression of our Christian joy, taking our text for our guide, we will render united and highest thanksgivings to Him who is the source of Truth, the author of every good gift, the approver of every benevolent design, the Father of the ages, the Father of mercies: "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen."

The Scriptures now became the property of the people. With these in their hands they carried on the Reformation, and it would probably have gone on to perfection if it had not been stopped, as it was first put in motion, by the authority of the King and the Parliament.

Imperfect as the text and translation of the authorized version of the Bible have been admitted to be, and much as it is to be lamented that both the law and public prejudice, the creature probably of the law, have from the beginning stood, and still stand, in the way of a rational interpretation of the Scriptures, it would be both uncandid and ungrateful to our forefathers not to allow that the free circulation of the Divine records, as we now have them in English, has been and is an inestimable blessing. To the Reformers higher praise cannot be awarded than that, like Ezra and the Levites referred to in our text, "they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading." The priests of the old church read in *their* book, which was, however, not the pure "law of God," but a mixture of that law and of human tradition; they did not read "distinctly," but, as one of their own order, living in our day, confessed, muttered their masses in secret,* their object being rather to be gazed at than heard; nor did they "give the sense" of their reading, but on the contrary wrapped up their meaning in an unknown tongue; nor did they "cause" or seek or wish that the people should understand: the

* Dr. Geddes. Modest Apology, pp. 165, 166.

use of the understanding was interdicted as presumptuous and heretical, and it had even grown into an ecclesiastical maxim, that *Ignorance is the mother of Devotion.* The Reformation, as far as it was real, established the principles of the sufficiency of scripture, of the right of private judgment, of the supremacy of individual conscience and of the answerableness of man to his Saviour and his Maker only for his faith and worship. These I proceed to shew were the doctrines of the Reformation, however they were forgotten or violated, and whatever inconsistencies there were between the declarations and the actions of the professed Reformers. The Reformation was, in truth, the assertion of religious liberty, and every doctrine, much more every action which infringes upon religious liberty, impairs its operation or narrows its sphere, is, according to its extent, a retrogression towards that miserable state from which the Reformation delivered our fathers. In this view, it may appear that many that most loudly extol the Reformers and most actively circulate the Bible, may "have need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God," the elements of truth and freedom.

There are two lights in which the Reformation may be contemplated; either as a change of faith, considered by those that underwent the change as an improvement, the exchange of error for truth,—or, as the establishment of a new rule of faith, namely private judgment, or the sense and reason of the individual judging,—in other words, the substitution of liberty of conscience for human authority. These views are quite distinct; both are important, though they are not

of equal importance. The right of judging is of unspeakably more consequence than the act of judging. The opinions of the Reformers might be all wrong, and yet the principle on which they proceeded in adopting them may be indisputable and of the highest value and most beneficial influence. So, again, the ancient doctrine might, in all other respects, have been true, and yet the principle on which it was enforced, that of the supremacy or infallibility of the Pope and the authority of the Church, may be wrong and even pernicious.

As a change of faith, no Protestant will lightly value the Reformation. He has only to enumerate the doctrines which it subverted to be convinced that a great mass of folly and absurdity was thrown to the ground by that great event.

The sale of Indulgences which first awakened the mind of Luther, was an abuse of common sense, a violation of morality, and a prostitution of the sacred name and holy office of religion. This profligate practice was one of the noxious fruits of the doctrine of supererogation, which means, that the saints of the church have had a greater stock of merits than was wanted for their own salvation, and that the superfluity is the treasure of the Church and may be applied by her to make up the moral deficiencies of good believers. So utterly incapable of defence or apology was this traffic, that it was no sooner exposed than it fell under general reprobation, and would not now be tolerated by Catholics any more than by Protestants.

The prominent tenet of the Church of Rome is, the doctrine of the Real Presence—by which is meant, that

in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper the bread and wine are changed into the true body and blood of Christ united to his soul and divinity. This conversion of the elements of the Eucharist is called Transubstantiation. The more common explanation of the miracle is, that the substances of the bread and wine are *annihilated,* and the body and blood of Christ substituted in their stead.* Explanation, however, has been, and perhaps wisely, refused by some Catholic writers, on the ground of the change of the bread and wine being a mystery, which must be received with adoring silence, and not tried at the bar of human reason. Protestants treat this allegation with much scorn, some of them forgetting that they too have their mysteries which it is dangerous to bring to the test of argument. The late Dr. Geddes, a Catholic priest, but put under an interdict by his Church for his free opinions, declared that, in his judgment, the doctrine of Transubstantiation was a *gnat* compared to the *camel* of the doctrine of the Trinity.†

While the first Protestants were all agreed in rejecting the doctrine of the real presence, they were remarkably at variance with regard to the scriptural doctrine of the Eucharist. Luther satisfied himself with an hypothesis, forming a sort of composition with the Church of Rome: he denied the conversion of the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ, but maintained the real presence of Christ with these substances: his doctrine is designated by the term Consubstantiation. The Genevan Reformer, Calvin, was not always consistent with himself; he sometimes

* Note IX. † Modest Apol. p. 29

admitted a real presence, but at others explained the presence to be merely figurative. His wavering language was adopted by his disciples who drew up the offices of the Church of England, which declares in her Catechism, that the "body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper," but explains in the twenty-eighth of the Thirty-nine Articles, that "the body of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner; and the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in in the Supper is Faith." It is known to all readers of English history, that this half-Catholic, half-Protestant doctrine was in great favour with Queen Elizabeth, who was always afraid that the Reformation should be carried too far, and whose fears, as the head of the Church and the principal founder of English Protestantism, as it now exists by law, lay like a spell upon the minds of the compilers of our public formularies of instruction and devotion. A third doctrine was that of the Zuinglians, who, after the Swiss Reformer, from whom they are named, held, that the words of our Lord, "This is my body," "This is my blood," are a mere figure, and that there is no real presence, of any kind, of the body and blood of Christ, in the Eucharist. The advocates of this scheme were called Sacramentarians. Their notion seems to have prevailed amongst the mass of Protestants, including the Lutherans. Bishop Hoadly, of the Church of England, refined upon it, and contended that the Lord's Supper is merely an act of commemoration. This is, probably, the general persuasion of British Protes-

tants, though many of them delight in the use of mystical language in relation to the sacred ordinance.

The Mass and the adoration of the Host naturally sprung from the doctrine of the real presence. By the Mass is meant what we call the Communion Service, in which the Church of Rome asserts that there is an unbloody and mystical, but a real sacrifice. The worship paid to the host, or transubstantiated wafer, has been usually stigmatized by Protestants as idolatry; but it should be remembered that the worshipers believe that Jesus Christ is really and essentially there, and believe also, with the greater number of objectors to their worship, that Jesus Christ is truly and personally God. Grant them their own principles, and I see not how we can justly object to their practice.

One doctrine has been a great argument with Protestants against the Church of Rome, viz. the doctrine of Purgatory, or an intermediate state, between Death and the Resurrection, in which the faithful who die imperfect are placed in order to be purified for Heaven. There is some humanity and charity, at least, in the notion. It would have been more humane and charitable if it had embraced not only Christians, but heretics, Jews and Heathens. It is charity itself compared with the Protestant and Protestant Dissenting doctrine, that all that die under certain errors, relating perhaps to mere mysteries, are consigned at death to total, final, irrevocable and endless punishment in positive pains and tortures. Let it be observed, however, that the shameful use made by ecclesiastics of the doctrine of purgatory, roused the indignation of the people, when the kindred notion of

the efficacy of Indulgences and the consequent sale of them, had provoked religious inquiry, — for it was taught that masses for the souls of the dead would, in proportion to their number and the frequency of their repetition, mitigate the severity and shorten the duration of purgatorial suffering, and under this belief an incredible mass of property was left by the dying for the good of their souls, insomuch that express statutes were obliged to be enacted by Catholic, and zealously Catholic, British legislatures, for preventing the lands of the kingdom from being swallowed up by the Church. No small portion of the revenues belonging to the present Church Establishment was bequeathed for the solemnly-defined purpose of helping the deceased testators out of purgatory by means of masses. And yet, when it is proposed by an enlightened government to take such of this property in Ireland as is held by those that not only do not fulfil the original purpose of the gift, but absolutely do no religious service, and cannot possibly do any, in consideration of it, and to apply it to the education and moral and scriptural instruction of all the youth in that country, without regard to the faith and worship of their parents, any further than to take care that, under the guise of education, that faith and worship shall not be opposed or insulted, the cry is raised of disregard to testamentary piety, of invasion of the sacred interests of the Church, and of spoliation and plunder.

Time will not allow me to go into all the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, denied and abolished, in whole or in part, at the Reformation. I can only glance at a few of the more important.

The dogma of the seven Sacraments is a palpable abuse of words. There is no Sacrament, or, as the word imports, a religious oath, ordained or even hinted at in the New Testament, though in conformity to custom the word is retained and applied to the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in Protestant communions. The seven Catholic Sacraments are, Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Matrimony, Holy Orders and the Eucharist. The last but one of these, Holy Orders, was an assumption of the priesthood for keeping up their dignity and power. It imported, that they received at ordination, by the imposition of the hands of the Bishop, the Holy Ghost, descended in an unbroken succession from the apostles, and conferring upon the receivers supernatural authority and an indefeasible sacred authority, indelible even by notorious error and flagrant crime. Most of the reformed countries abandoned from the first this arrogant conceit, so inconsistent with the humble doctrine of the Founder of our faith, with the equality of all Christians which the apostles invariably maintained, and with the liberties of Christian churches. Unhappily, it was retained in Great Britain; and thus, whilst the Church of Rome is denounced as false and corrupt, and doomed to perdition, by our articles and homilies, and even by some of our tests of civil and political allegiance, our national priesthood claims the mysterious qualification of Holy Orders, through her agency, in a direct line from the apostles; and she is so far acknowledged by the Church of England to be a true and apostolical Church, that her priests are admitted into our priest-

hood without re-ordination, although this privilege is granted to no ministers of any of the reformed Churches, notwithstanding their being legally established, and not even to the ministers of the neighbouring Church of Scotland, which yet is acknowledged and protected as a Christian Church by the laws of the realm. An attempt has been repeatedly made to trace the succession of Holy Orders from the apostles to the English Protestant Bishops, and thence to the whole body of our national ministers, without the help of the Church of Rome; upon the hypothesis, that some apostle, generally supposed to be St. Paul, visited these islands in order to introduce the Gospel, and that from him the Holy Ghost and the investiture of Orders, were imparted to the British Prelates, who communicated the sacred gift to the Saxon Prelates, from whom it has come down to the present possessors. Were there any historic truth in this ecclesiastical genealogy, it would scarcely relieve the Church of England from the difficulty, since it must still be admitted that the line of descent passed for ages through prelates, who, though of the British Church, were still devoted members of the Church of Rome, which they held to be apostolical and one and indivisible. The solemn fiction can scarcely deceive those who, distressed for want of argument, appeal to its assistance.*

The Invocation of Saints, and particularly of the Virgin Mary, is, if the New Testament be our standard, a superstition which is divided by a very thin partition from idolatry. By this act the dead are sup-

* Note X.

posed to be living, to have a sort of omnipresence and omniscience, which qualifies them for hearing at the same moment the prayers of all the inhabitants of the globe, and to be invested with at least the character of mediators and intercessors in heaven. The extravagance of these assumptions is but little relieved by the consideration of the good feelings—the feelings of veneration for the memory of the wise, virtuous and pious—in which they may have been conceived.

Some decided Protestants have looked with tenderness upon another usage of the Catholic Church, which was abandoned by all the first Reformers, that is, praying for the dead. There is, perhaps, no other evil in this species of worship, than that it takes for granted, what is, to say the least, very doubtful, that the character and condition of departed souls can be affected by the intercessions of the living; unless, indeed, it be added that it is worship wholly unwarranted by the genuine scriptures, and, therefore, not likely to be agreeable to the principles of divine revelation. Friendship, and pure and generous affection, may have found solace in such acts of devotion, and have been nourished by them to greater strength, and qualified for livelier exercise, but it is dangerous to allow the imagination or the feelings to prescribe and direct in a matter so serious as religion, and especially in the exercise of the solemn duty of communion with the Majesty of heaven and earth.

I pass by the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome, with respect to communion in one kind, or the refusal of the cup to the laity; to the celibacy of the clergy; to monastic orders; to pilgrimages; to

images, and to relics, and proceed to take notice of the extraordinary tenet, the growth of ages, which was cut down at once by the Reformers, of the Supremacy of the Pope. Here was the root of all the corruptions of the Church, and of many of the evils that afflicted Christendom during the dark ages. Connected as the doctrine was, for a long time, with the doctrine, which alone could seem to justify it, of the infallibility of the papal see, and even of the pontiffs personally considered, it sanctioned the erection of a despotism more formidable than the world ever saw,—a despotism wholly unrestrained, universal, and interminable. Princes and nations trembled before a power which had the keys of both worlds, and was clothed with the attributes of divinity. That the audacity even of successful priestcraft could have dared to assert so impious a claim, or that the ignorance and terror of a benighted world should have submitted for a moment to so monstrous a pretension, excite our astonishment and indignation, and our shame for fallen human nature. For some of the dogmas of the Romish Church, some excuse, some apology may be found, in the condition of the times, or in the infirmities of the human mind, or even in the amiable weaknesses of the human heart; but for this, no justification, no palliative has ever been suggested. The usurpation and tyranny, the exaction and oppression of the papal see, were, from beginning to end, fraud and hypocrisy, and high-handed wickedness. It was the man of sin, sitting in the throne of God.

Happily for the world, the secular interests of princes and states were sometimes stronger than their

superstition. Forced into conflict with the Universal Bishop, who aspired to be King of kings, and Lord of lords, they found out by degrees the truth, which was fatal to his authority, that he was man, and not God, and that he possessed, in an eminent degree, the worst qualities of the worst of men. Had not religious principles and feelings risen up, political interests would soon have effected a Reformation. Luther and the other intrepid Reformers would have spoken in vain, if a great part of the Christian world had not been prepared by temporal calculations and national feelings to throw off the intolerable and degrading yoke of the papal dominion. Once denounced as an usurper and tyrant, the spiritual giant fell. A general Council, that of Trent, could not uphold the falling throne of iniquity. Nations retaining their union with the See of Rome renounced its daring pretensions. The whole Gallican Church abandoned the fiction of the Pope's infallibility, confining this attribute of the Supreme Being to an œcumenical council, or a council representing the whole Christian world; and from the era of the Reformation down to the present time, the authority of the Bishop of Rome has been sinking, the sources of his wealth have been dried up, he has been subjected to marked indignities by his professed spiritual children, the churches called by his name yield him a merely nominal subjection, and the only remains of the power of this former Lord and Arbiter and Disposer of Nations, are to be found in the disputed government of a declining city, of some few disaffected towns, and of a petty district of barren territories.

On this subject, the Roman Catholics of the present day write and speak cautiously and tenderly, but, if I am not mistaken, the majority of them attribute none but spiritual authority to the Pope, and rejoice with Protestants in the abrogation of his temporal power, and thus acknowledge the blessings of the Reformation, which, like all the other merciful interferences of Divine Providence, has proved a signal benefit, not only to those that have actively concurred in it, but to all that have come within the sphere of its influence.

Two alleged dogmas of the Catholic Church whetted the resentment and sharpened the zeal of the original Reformers, and have been, from their time to this, urged by the greater number of Protestants, and with much effect, against the Romish hierarchy.

One is, that no faith is to be kept with heretics, a licentious and profligate principle, but one which may certainly be found in the writings of some of the Casuists of the Romish Church, and even in documents issuing from the Papal throne; and one which was sometimes acted upon, to the scandal of all honest men, as in the martyrdom of John Huss. Further, it must be admitted, that the power of dispensing with oaths was sometimes arrogated and exercised by the Roman Pontiffs, who thus assumed the mastery over all laws, human and divine, and trampled under foot all the solemn sanctions of morality. That such excesses were ever committed, is an unanswerable argument against the supremacy of the Pope, and the infallible authority of the Church. At the same time, justice and candour require the concession that these doctrines and proceedings are not imputable to the

whole Catholic body, that they were always denounced and protested against by distinguished members of that communion, and that the history of Europe, for ages, shews, that they were not adopted as general practical rules, and were only resorted to, in order to serve some momentary wicked purpose, by daring violators of the universally acknowledged laws of morality, who have occasionally risen up in every church of every nation. The mass of Catholics in this country have testified their reverence of oaths, by submitting for centuries to civil penalties and political degradation, rather than take such as implied the renunciation of their religious faith; and the legislature has virtually attested the same fact, by continuing to impose oaths upon them, as effectual bars to their admission to place and power, or as securities against the abuse of their privileges.*

The other principle is, that there is no salvation out of the Catholic Church: and it must be confessed that, in bringing this charge, Protestants have done no wrong to the Church of Rome. The doctrine is unquestionably Catholic, and so intolerant, so unscriptural, so anti-christian is it, that, alone, it would have justified and called for the Reformation. It takes the keys of the invisible world out of the hands of the only Lord in the church, to whom they are committed by the Almighty Father, and puts them in the keeping of erring, sinful mortals. It is, in truth, a practical assumption of the Divine attribute of reading the human heart, and an invasion of the prerogative of judging the quick and dead. And the effects of this

* Note XI.

impious presumption and arrogance have been as pernicious, as the cause is monstrous and wicked. Division in families, feuds in neighbourhoods, distractions in churches, and convulsions in states, confiscation, exile, imprisonment, slaughter, have all flowed from the baneful principle. As long, and as far as its influence extends, there can be neither peace nor prosperity in civil society, nor can the religion of the gospel answer its promised end of blessing mankind, by making them a blessing to one another.

But if uncharitableness, if the evil spirit of bigotry, if the disposition to injure, to degrade, to insult, to vex another on account of his faith and worship, if the invocation of eternal vengeance upon a supposed erring fellow-christian,—if this be one of the marks, and the deepest mark, of the Great Apostacy, then, alas! we must admit that the Reformation was, and still is imperfect: and that the essence of what is called Popery was retained in the Reformed Churches, and continues to stain the character of Protestant and Protestant Dissenting Communities, almost all of whom have their idol-creed, before which men must bow, their sacred and unchangeable dogmas of which they say in defiance, "This is the sound faith, which, except a man do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly," and their Shibboleths, the test of orthodoxy, the incapacity of pronouncing which brings down upon any one, however wise, virtuous and pious, reproach and anathema, the imputation of heresy, exclusion from Christian communion, the deprivation of the very name of Christian, and the sentence of eternal fire. This is a deplorable evil, but,

thanks be to God, it is not incurable. The Reformation is going on, and it will proceed, till it has searched out and removed this root of bitterness, whose fruit has so long poisoned men's hearts, and thereby perverted human laws into instruments of oppression, and corrupted the Gospel of peace into a declaration of war, and changed Heaven's glad tidings into a curse upon mankind.

It is very common to speak of the Reformation as if it were merely a renunciation of what are called the errors of Popery, and the adoption of another and purer creed. This is, I conceive, a great and hurtful mistake. Had all the theological doctrines of the Church of Rome been retained, there might and would have been a Reformation. Whether those doctrines could have long maintained their ground in the midst of free inquiry and discussion, is another question, which we should perhaps be disposed to answer negatively, if we did not know that doctrines equally incomprehensible and astounding are held in spite of the knowledge and freedom which have long been the distinction of most Protestant countries; and if we did not also see, that the Catholic religion, spiritually considered, is not only kept alive in countries which have acknowledged the Reformation, and been most strenuous in their opposition to the Church of Rome, but is growing, and, in some free states, is said to be making rapid progress.

The origin of the appellation *Protestant*, shews the

true principle of the Reformation. A few years after the publication of Luther's doctrine, the Emperor of Germany, Charles V., appointed a Diet of the Empire to be held at Spires, March 15, 1529, in order to take into consideration the state of religion. This assembly resolved, by a majority of voices, to enjoin those states of the empire which had hitherto obeyed the decree issued against Luther at Worms, in the year 1524, to persevere in the observation of it, and to prohibit the other states from attempting any farther innovation in religion, particularly from abolishing the mass before the meeting of a General Council. Against this decree, the Elector of Saxony, and several other princes, and the Deputies of fourteen Imperial or free cities, entered a solemn *protest,* as being unjust and impious. On this account they were distinguished by the name of PROTESTANTS; "an appellation," it has been remarked,* "which hath since become better known and more honourable, by its being applied indiscriminately to all the sects, of whatever denomination, which have revolted from the Roman See."

Protestantism, therefore, is not so much a collection of doctrines differing from those of the Church of Rome, as the assertion of the right of private judgment in religious matters, and the duty of ecclesiastical improvement. This involves the sufficiency of the Scriptures as the rule of faith, and is equivalent to the admission of the use of reason in religion. Most of the Reformers, I am obliged to concede, laid down maxims inconsistent with these principles, and sometimes trampled them under foot, in pursuit of

* Dr. Robertson, Charles V., B. v. 1530.

authority and power; but they could not have stood their ground as Reformers a single day, if such principles had not been advanced for their protection and defence. There is no other conceivable justification of their secession from the Romish Church. In this manner, Luther defended himself before the Diet at Worms, 1531, to which he was cited, that he might publicly and solemnly retract his opinions. Addressing the Emperor, he said, "Since your majesty, and the sovereigns now present, require a simple answer, I shall reply thus, without evasion, and without vehemence. Unless I be convinced, by the testimony of *scripture,* or by evident *reason,* (for I cannot rely on the authority of the Pope and councils alone, since it appears that they have frequently erred, and contradicted each other,) and unless my conscience be subdued by the Word of God, I neither can, nor will retract any thing, seeing that to act against my own conscience is neither safe nor honest." After which, he added in his native German, "*Here I take my stand, I can do no other;* God be my help! Amen."

In argument with Roman Catholics, Protestants have from the beginning made their appeal to the understanding and the senses. It is only when they are in controversy with such as are more strenuous Reformers than themselves, that they take faith out of the province of reason. Look at any of their writings relating to the errors of the Church of Rome, and you will find them using, involuntarily, language which has no meaning, if the human mind be not a competent and the ultimate judge in religious opinions. For example, the historian Strype, himself very rigid in

his creed and worship, thus relates Sir John Cheke's conversion to Protestantism in his life of that learned man:* "Upon good and substantial grounds, he was a hearty professor of the reformed religion, which he took not up upon a precarious account, or any secular reason or interest; but upon mature examination and trial of the principles of that religion that generally swayed, and was professed in his time. He, being of an inquisitive, philosophical mind, first of all began to doubt of the great distinguishing Popish doctrines, that the body and blood of Christ is substantially and carnally present in the Sacrament; because he saw it so far beyond all possibility of being reconciled to *reason* and *sense*."

In truth, the great heresy of the first Protestants in the eyes of the professors of the ancient faith was their constantly appealing, as this writer says, to reason and sense for the settlement of any disputed point. By this means, and this alone, was the monstrous fable of transubstantiation brought into discredit, but it is self-evident that, without the grossest inconsistency, an inconsistency scarcely reconcileable to good faith, to moral integrity, Protestants cannot reason down the Roman Catholic dogmas, and then attempt to shield some favourite dogmas of their own, under the plea of mystery. All doctrines must be brought to the test of reason, or none. There is no middle path. To claim for any notion the privilege of being exempt from investigation is to concede the principle which would have strangled the Reformation at its birth. Who shall determine the doctrines which are to

* In 8vo. Ch. viii. § 1. p. 225.

be sheltered in the sanctuary of implicit faith? Any man may put his absurdities within this pale. But the plea of mystery is, in reality, the claim of some authority above and against reason and sense. Now this must be either the authority of the church or of the individual; if of the church, you then have the essence of popery, under whatever name you veil your encroachment upon the human mind; if of the individual, you merely transfer the assumed infallibility of the Pope to every one who will claim it, and the claimants will commonly be the most ignorant and insolent and fraudulent of mankind. In both cases, there is a pretension to a mighty miracle; but the pretension is more indecent and less pardonable in an individual than in the church. For the church there is, at least, the specious argument that the majority are more likely to be right than the minority; but the single aspirant to infallibility would have us believe that the unerring spirit has selected him for its revelations; and of this internal miracle there is and can be no evidence; the subject of it gives you nothing but his own assertion, which may or may not accord with his own persuasion: he does not work external miracles, he does not shew superior wisdom, and he would probably scorn any reference to his personal virtues as proofs of his election to infallibility of mind. The whole thing is, therefore, reduced to a man's flattering himself with a calling and gifts, which he cannot shew in any way that he possesses, and which he commonly uses for a very different purpose from that for which all unquestionable Divine revelation is imparted; the use of Divine revelation being to save the world, and the application of the pretended private revelation

being to vex and scatter the children of men, to taint their hearts with mutual hatred in this world, and to heighten the malignity by the threat of eternal persecution in the world to come.

Small indeed would have been the benefit of the Reformation, if it had merely dislodged the Pope of Rome to set up a pope in every individual professor of the Gospel. The able and learned French Catholic Bishop Bossuet said truly, that there can be but two rational religious denominations, those that admit of ecclesiastical authority to determine the true faith, and those that, rejecting this, refer all doctrines to the tribunal of reason or sense; in short, that the Christian world must finally consist of but two sects, the Roman Catholics and, as he named them, the "Infidels," meaning by them all that renounce the supremacy of the Church.*

I have more than once adverted to the difference between the principle of the Reformation and the doctrines of the Reformers. The one principle, how imperfectly so ever understood, and how often so ever violated, was Religious Liberty, the liberty of individual conscience with regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the profession of faith and the observance of worship; the doctrines of the Reformers were various, changeable, inconsistent and irreconcileable. Yet the great principle is forgotten, except when there is a controversy with Roman Catholics; and the doctrines of the Reformation are perpetually insisted on by large parties in the present day, as if they were fixed and steady and systematic, as if they were a new and final revelation, and as if they were

* Note XII.

to bind the understanding and rule the language of all successive generations. But who shall define the doctrinal creed of the Reformers, differing as it did in every country, almost in every individual, and changing as it was every year? Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Cranmer disagreed on many important points, and underwent many and great changes between the time of their first appearance as reformers and that of their death. None of those I have mentioned would probably have admitted each other to Christian communion. The Lutherans persecuted the Sacramentarians. The Zuinglians, acting a miserable joke, *drowned* the *Baptists*. The English fugitives from the Marian persecution were driven from one city of the reformed territories to another, as heretics. Luther maintained in early life, some say to the last, the doctrine of the sleep of the soul between death and the resurrection, in order to cut away the ground on which the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory was based; Calvin wrote against this doctrine with more than his usual vehemence, denouncing it as the most putrid of errors. On the Sacrament, the reformers were nearly all divided by fainter or broader lines. Zuinglius called in question the fundamental Calvinistic doctrine of original sin, and admitted, to the astonishment of some of his reforming contemporaries, the salvation of virtuous Heathens. The great German Reformer scandalized the Protestant world by his abuse of the Epistle of St. James, which he derided as *chaffy* because it taught the indispensable necessity of good works. The Reformers generally decried works, but not being prepared to reject a canonical book of scripture, they re-

tained the epistle, and endeavoured, as well they could, to reconcile to it the dogma of justification by faith.

It is for this dogma, justification by faith, with its concomitants, that the party called *Evangelical* in the Church of England, and *Orthodox* amongst Protestant Dissenters, prize and extol the Reformation. The collection of doctrines, of which this is the head, including original sin, and effectual calling, and amongst the Calvinists, personal election and final perseverance, are styled, by excellence, the doctrines of the Reformation and the doctrines of grace. Whatever be their excellence, they were not the offspring of the Reformation. They were conceived by the celebrated Saint Augustin, and were handed down from him, through monasteries of mystics, to Luther, in whose cell the Reformation began. They were opposed, as soon as they appeared, in the Church of Rome and in the Reformed Churches. And it is somewhat singular that while these notions have been generally accounted sound and saving in the Scottish Church, in a portion, daily increasing, of the English Church, and by the great majority of the English Dissenters, they have been gradually dropped or extremely modified, by the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches of the Continent, so that Wirtemberg and Geneva are the last places in which you would now look for what are here termed emphatically the doctrines of the Reformation, i. e. the doctrines of Augustin, Luther and Calvin, with regard to the efficacy of faith and the terms of salvation.

This last observation leads me to remark, that history does not present a greater fallacy or a more flagrant wrong than confining the Reformation to Luther

and Calvin and their followers. Other Reformers there were, of at least equal learning and talents, as high in character and as prominent in noble daring, and perhaps as numerous, who carried ecclesiastical reform to its first principles, who rejected the popery of Geneva and Wirtemberg as well as the popery of Rome, who made the Bible really, what the other Reformers made it nominally, the only standard of truth, who contended for every man's liberty to read and to use the word of God, that is, to interpret it for himself, and to follow out its dictates according to his own sense of duty—who, in pursuit of divine truth, sacrificed the honours of birth and rank, gave up immense hereditary property, became willing exiles for the Gospel's sake, and exposed themselves to the destructive machinations of wily priests, the fury of the ignorant multitude, and the deadly bigotry of professing Reformers, who, resolved that there should be no reformation beyond their own limits of reform, adopted for their theological ensign the infallibility of which they had despoiled the Roman pontiff, and displayed their sense of their divine prerogative by persecution quite as fierce and much more crafty than that for which they condemned the Catholic Church. I allude to the great Socinus and the band of Italian Reformers, including some of the choicest spirits of the age, men to be had in everlasting remembrance, who raised the standard of religious liberty in the very heart of spiritual despotism, and migrated to a distant land and there settled under a precarious protection, consecrating Poland as the Canaan of northern Europe, by their learning, talents, sufferings and virtues. The Soci-

nian Reformers had their defects; from some of their opinions we strongly dissent; but justice, and not an affinity of belief, compels me to say, that I am persuaded the sun of our system never shone upon a company of men more venerable, more pure, more devoted to the great interests of the human species, more worthy of the name of Reformers, or more entitled to be regarded as close and accepted followers of the Reformer of Galilee, the True and Faithful Witness.

These great and good men are excluded by common consent from the dictionaries of reform and the rolls of martyrology; but I scruple not to say that, if I read the New Testament aright, their names are written in heaven, or to express my firm belief that honours will grow around them in the historic page, that posterity will award them the palm and the laurel, and that they will take their places in the righteous estimation of a world, liberated from prejudice and bigotry, amongst those bright characters that conceived and endeavoured too much for their own times, but whom succeeding ages have, in proportion to the growth of intellect, the advancement of learning and the rise of charity above creeds and forms, looked up to and delighted to honour.*

Nor let us limit our praise to the men that left the Church of Rome, and boldly assumed the name and rank of Reformers. There were great names ostensibly connected with that Church, whose minds and hearts were emancipated from its degrading bondage, and who contributed largely to the spread of true knowledge, the detection of imposture, the resist-

* Note XIII.

ance to spiritual tyranny, and the promotion of that Charity, the Charity of the Gospel, which looks at man without regard to the dress of a creed or a liturgy, and in every man, not a rebel to his nature and his God, by vice and crime, sees a child of the universal and all-merciful Father. At the head of these actual, though not professed, Reformers, was Erasmus, of Rotterdam, the first of scholars, the prince of biblical students, who claims remembrance on this occasion as the earliest of the editors of and commentators on the New Testament, and particularly, in this place, as the detector of the great forgery designed to palm upon the world a plurality of persons in the Divine nature. He was also connected with our own country, the associate of our learned men and the promoter, in conjunction with them, of scriptural knowledge. His not joining the Reformation has been generally regretted and even blamed by Protestants, but I cannot help thinking that his very liberality of soul prevented his union with men who, while in the integrity of their hearts they thought they were serving Christ, were, as he thought, and as we now think, degrading a beautiful moral system into a mere collection of articles of faith, and overthrowing a despotism, venerable at least for its antiquity and universality, in order to set up another quite as galling, and more degrading and vexatious, from its being the despotism of individual over individual, and the despotism of a party stunning the ears of the world with shouts of liberty. Never yet, as it appears to me, has justice been done to Erasmus; he was the father of a race of men who have been eminent benefactors to the world, by their

learning, their piety, and, above all, their charitable feelings;* amongst whom stands foremost the universal scholar, the renowned civilian, the accomplished historian, the sagacious biblical critic, and the never-failing liberal theologian, Grotius, at once the glory and the reproach of Holland, honest though a statesman, ever honourable though degraded by the proverbial insincerity and ingratitude of a court, the first rational expounder in modern times of the evidences of Christianity, and the only Protestant from the period of the Reformation down to his own time who would allow the Roman Catholic conscience or sense or peace, and who did not think it necessary, for the defence of rational religion and Protestant principles, to maintain that the Pope was Antichrist or that Rome was the Babylon of the Apocalypse. Most cheerfully do I concede to Luther and Calvin and their honoured associates the praise of general purity of moral principle, of extraordinary talents, of inflexible courage and of entire devotedness to what they considered to be Christian truth; but as they protested against what they held to be the errors of the Church of Rome, so do I publicly and solemnly protest against what I consider to be their errors, and errors as flagrant and as mischievous as are to be found in the articles drawn up by the Council of Trent. Their doctrines of grace, as they are pleasantly called by the Evangelical party who now rule the religious world, I regard as doctrines of wrath, which take from the Supreme Father every attribute which renders him lovely and adorable, and represent the reign of Heaven

* Note XV.

as the worst of despotisms, where arbitrary will and caprice drive away justice, where the whole system is on the one side fond favouritism, and on the other exclusion and reprobation, where virtue stands for nothing, or, rather, is a hindrance to salvation, (so Luther boldly declared and Calvin seems to insinuate,) and where every thing that renders man wise and good and great is esteemed as a thing of nought, or matter of eternal condemnation. What, I ask, were the errors of the Church of Rome compared to these absurd, uncharitable and heart-withering dogmas, still said and sung by that part of the people of England who arrogate to themselves the sole property in the Christian name? An historian who held the scales even between the Catholics and the Protestants has said, as I conceive very justly, "many a sober Christian would rather admit that a wafer is God, than that God is a cruel and capricious tyrant." *

Leaving, then, the doctrines of the Reformers as the private opinions, or rather, conjectures of men who had but just been cured of their blindness and saw "men as trees walking," who could not possibly have emancipated themselves from all their prejudices, who were but infants in the study of the Scriptures, and read the Scriptures in an imperfect text and in versions which were but first attempts to domesticate them in the vernacular tongues of Europe,—we take our stand upon the one great principle on which alone the Reformation can be defended, the right to use reason in religion—a principle which the mass of Protestants seem to have forgotten and which they

* Gibbon, 8vo, Vol. X. p. 90.

habitually oppose in their controversies with fellow-Protestants who would still carry on the Reformation, and in the spirit, rather than according to the practice, of the first Reformers, would go on to perfection.*

Of this true principle of the Reformation the late Archdeacon Paley said, in the dedication of his great work, the Moral Philosophy, to Dr. Law, the Bishop of Carlisle, one of the modern religious reformers, who presented the singular spectacle of an Unitarian presiding in an Athanasian Church, and doomed to use and sanction and compel the frequent repetition of a creed which contradicted his published opinions and pronounced upon him, and all whom he led by his arguments, the sentence of eternal condemnation,—"When the doctrine of transubstantiation had taken possession of the Christian world, it was not without the industry of learned men that it came at length to be discovered that no such doctrine was contained in the New Testament. But had those excellent persons done nothing more by their discovery than abolish an innocent superstition, or change some directions in the ceremonial of public worship, they had merited little of that veneration with which the gratitude of Protestant churches remembers their services. What they did for mankind was this: they exonerated Christianity of a weight which sunk it. If indolence or timidity had checked these exertions, or suppressed the fruit and publication of these inquiries, is it too much to affirm, that infidelity would at this day have been universal?"

* Note XVI.

The maxim of Chillingworth, which has become a Protestant watchword, "The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants," is perfectly true, but not so in the sense in which that distinguished reasoner and reformer used the words. By the Bible he meant the judgment of every individual upon the Bible; by the Bible is now meant the exposition of it in the creeds and articles of the first Reformers. The Bible is useless except as the mind of man gives it an use. Truth is not in a paper with marks upon it—it is inscribed solely upon the understanding. Clear as this is, it was overlooked in great measure by the Reformers and continues to be overlooked by their followers, who seem to revere the *material* Bible, resting in the letter and caring little for the spirit. They have transferred the supreme authority over conscience from the pope to the Bible, as if the Bible were a living Judge, speaking unerring verities, and have neglected the human mind, which alone can give life and power to a book. The understanding must determine first the authority and next the sense of the Scriptures, otherwise you have implicit faith and words without a determinate meaning. But sense and reason are heresy with Protestants and Protestant Dissenters. They enjoin you to inquire, but warn you that, if your inquiries do not end in some one point, you will go fatally wrong. They thrust the Bible into your hands, charging you that your salvation depends upon the incessant use of it, but threatening you with eternal damnation if you put an interpretation upon any passage inconsistent with Cranmer's Thirty-nine Articles, or the Confession of the West-

minster Presbyterian Divines. You are bound to think, but woe to you if you entertain a single thought not enacted as orthodox by Luther or Calvin. Stray but one inch from the beaten path, and you will be pursued with the noisy and angry cry of *heresy*. You must confess as against the Church of Rome, the fallibility of all churches and all individuals, in order to admit the infallibility of the compilers of some Protestant creed. This is absurd and ridiculous every where, but amongst Protestant Dissenters it is folly, for which there yet wants a name. These persons preaching against Catholics on the one hand and Unitarians on the other, resemble Henry VIII., who sent to the same stake the Catholic who asserted the Pope's Supremacy, and the Protestant who denied the real presence. Against Roman Catholics, they contend for the supremacy of conscience, and the right of using reason in matters of religion, while at the same time they contend against Unitarians for some ancient standard of orthodoxy, (which implies infallibility,) pronounce them heretics, which of course is the same as to punish free inquiry, and condemn them to everlasting punishment, the only punishment which the law and public opinion allow them to inflict; at least, beyond the penalty of throwing imputations upon their motives, questioning their piety, denying, notwithstanding their own assertion and profession, their exertions and sacrifices for the cause of religion, and the sufferings of their fathers, that they are in any religious sense *Christians*, traducing their character, and doing hurt to their worldly interests, as far as they can do so, by holding them up as dangerous persons, and consequently, per-

sons to be religiously avoided in the relations of human life, not excepting charitable institutions, where, if any where, the spirit of Christian charity might be expected to prevail.*

The Dissenters of this country have, I conceive, gone backward rather than forward, with regard to Protestantism, which is to be explained by their growing indolent acquiescence in the doctrines of the Reformers, as though the Reformation were an event that is passed, and not a work that must be accomplished in every individual mind. From this subjection to authority, to the names of dead men, they were warned by one whom they profess to revere, the father, as Neal terms him, of the Independents, Mr. John Robinson, the pastor of a Church of English exiles in Holland. These were the pilgrims who founded the New England States in America. On their departure from Leyden for the other continent in 1620, their venerable pastor addressed them in words which the Independents of the present day would regard as too free, if not savouring of the worst heresy. "Brethren, we are now quickly to part from one another, and whether I may ever live to see your faces on earth any more, the God of heaven only knows, but whether the Lord has appointed that or no, I charge you before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no farther than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. If God reveal any thing to you, by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry, for I am verily persuaded, the Lord has more truth

* Note XVII.

yet to break forth out of his holy word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed Churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their Reformation. The *Lutherans* cannot be drawn to go beyond what *Luther* saw; whatever part of His will our God has revealed to *Calvin*, they will rather die than embrace it; and the *Calvinists*, you see, stick fast where they were left by that great man of God, who yet saw not all things. This is a misery much to be lamented, for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God, but were they now living, would be as willing to embrace further light, as that which they first received. I beseech you remember, it is an article of your Church covenant, that *you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written word of God.* Remember that, and every other article of your sacred covenant. But I must herewithal exhort you, to take heed what you receive as truth, examine it, consider it, and compare it with other scriptures of truth, before you receive it, for it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-christian darkness, and that perfection of knowledge should break forth at once."*

The great error of the Reformation, the parent of a numerous progeny, was the admission of human authority in the Church: hence came new creeds, bulky articles of faith, and the attempt of the magistrates to compel uniformity of religion. Persecution was the

* Neal, (Toulmin's edition,) II. 120, 121.

inevitable result, and Protestant persecution is not only more unpardonable, but has also been more malignant than that of the Church of Rome. Historians are now generally agreed in stigmatizing Calvin's burning Servetus, as the most atrocious barbarity and wickedness that was ever perpetrated in the name of the God of Mercy.*

The imperfection of the Reformation, the errors of Reformers, and the indolence and implicit faith of so large a part of the Reformed Church, point out our duties.

We must endeavour to save Christianity by further reform. Creeds and articles enjoined by authority, have chained down the Gospel, and bound with it the human mind in the severest bondage. There has been little progress since the Reformation. The Roman Catholics have improved as a church far beyond the Protestants.† In Great Britain and America, enthusiasm has set in as a flood, unexampled for its extent and influence, except, perhaps, in the fanaticism of the Crusades. The result is the spread of superstition on the one hand, and scepticism on the other. By a natural reaction the Catholic religion is gaining ascendancy over the people, whom Protestant orthodoxy has taught little or nothing, except that it is dangerous to inquire and sinful to doubt, but meritorious to prostrate the understanding before a mystery, and to profess to believe what cannot be comprehended, explained or proved; and unbelief is carrying off minds that are quick in the perception of absurdity, and look upon presumption and bigotry with abhorrence, and have not the means or the inclination to winnow Christian-

* Note XVIII. † Note XIX.

ity from the corrupt systems of its professors, and to throw away the chaff and treasure up the pure grain.

The use of one's own understanding in religion is compatible with deference to the understanding of others; such as think most are indeed best prepared, both to expect and to welcome latitude of thought. Ignorance and bigotry, knowledge and charity, are commonly found in company. But liberality is not indifference. While a sense of right compels you to allow every man to form, to express, and to act up to his opinions, Christian integrity enjoins you not to conceal, much less to disguise your own, upon subjects, at least, which are of vital importance, such as the pure worship of Almighty God, and the terms of man's acceptance with his Maker: for if men are not honest in their religion, where can we look for honesty? False shame, a slavish dread of public opinion, and a selfish regard to worldly interests, have in all ages and places checked Divine Truth in its progress, and have operated, especially since the Reformation, to prevent the full development of that blessing to mankind. Had all that perceived the remaining errors of the Protestant Churches openly denounced them, great would have been the change, rapid the improvement of the public mind. We should then have been saved from the humiliating spectacle of the subscription to or declaration of articles of faith which are not believed, or, which is nearly the same, not known to be true, and of knees bending in a worship which has not the sanction of the conscience or the concurrence of the heart. Nay, I will be bold to say, that if all of our own country in the present day who

think with us, were to act with us, we should be no longer taunted with the thinness of our ranks: the scale might possibly be turned, and the majority be found to consist of those who "know what they worship."

But whatever be the timidity of some, and the inconsistency of others, be it our care to maintain consciences void of offence, leaving the charge of Divine Truth to its adorable Author. The restlessness of the public mind in all countries prognosticates great and speedy changes; that these will be improvements I cannot for a moment doubt; the tendencies of opinion in all other things are hopeful, and religion cannot be the only province in which men will always deceive themselves, and choose to go wrong. To secure this result, it behoves us according to our ability to diffuse knowledge, the knowledge especially of Divine Revelation, and to declare unreservedly what we believe to be the Gospel. And let us be thus faithful to our Christian calling, and undaunted and unwavering in our testimony to pure religion, and even amidst unfavourable appearances and humbling vicissitudes in the public mind, we may rely upon the assurances of our Lord and Saviour, that the word of God, the charter of the soul's liberty, and the record of the inheritance of heavenly life, abideth for ever. God Almighty grant that this His Word may be your present hope and joy, and your final crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming. Amen.

NOTES.

Note I., page 8.

"I CANNOT but consider Sir Thomas More's authority as decisive upon this subject: his words are,—'Myself have sene and can shew you Bybles fayre and olde, written in Englyshe, whych have been knowen and sene by the Byshop of the dyocyse, and left in Leymennys handys and womens to suche as he knew for good and Catholike folke, that used it with devocyon and sobernesse.' (Dialogue, book iii. chap. 15.) He had previously said, that these translations 'were allready done of olde, before Wycklyffy's days.' Lewis has endeavoured to disprove this; but I do not think any reasoning can possibly outweigh the positive affirmation of such a man as Sir Thomas More, upon a matter of fact, on which he could not be mistaken. His words may imply that there existed a complete translation; but are not necessarily to be taken in that extent."

Southey's Book of the Church, p. 353.

Note II., page 10.

Tyndal's translation was the basis of subsequent editions of the English Bible. That called *Thomas Matthews's* was a reprint of Tyndal's, the name of Matthews being feigned, in order to get rid of a name so tainted with heresy as that of the martyred translator of the Scriptures. "Tyndal before his death had finished all but the Apocrypha, which was translated by Rogers, who added also some marginal notes." "John Rogers, a learned divine, was a Canon of St. Paul's in King Edward's time, and the first martyr in the next reign."

Strype, Mem. of Archbishop Cranmer, B. i. Ch. xvi.

Note III., page 11.

Miles Coverdale was a native of Yorkshire. Burnet appears to have originated the mistake of his being a Dane. (Brook's Puritans, I. 125.) He afterwards "professed of the house of Austin Friars in Cambridge, of which Dr. Barnes was Prior, who was burnt for pretended heresy." (Lewis's History of Translations of Bible, 92.) Strype relates that Grindal, when Bishop of London, was much troubled at the neglect of Coverdale, who "had gotten the plague, this year (1563) and recovered, as tho' God had some more work for him to do in the Church before his death;" and once cried out, "I cannot excuse us bishops." The bishop wrote on his behalf Secretary Cecil, "telling him that surely it was not well, that father Coverdale, as he styled him, *Qui ante nos omnes fuit in Christo*, i. e. *who was in Christ before us all*, should be in his age without stay of living." (Life and Acts of Grindal, B. i. ch. ix.) The application was for some cause, probably Coverdale's puritan scruples, unavailing. On Grindal's presenting him to the living of St. Magnus, he was so poor as to be unable to pay the first-fruits, and begged Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Cecil, the Secretary of State, to intercede with the Queen for the remission of these dues. In his letter to the Secretary, he acknowledged former help and succour from him, and added "if now, that Poor old Miles must be provided for, it would please him to obtain this for him, he should think this *Enough* to be as good as a feast."

"Coverdale wrote," according to Strype, (Life of Archbishop Parker, B. ii. Ch. xviii.,) a month or six weeks after to the Archbishop again, signifying that the Lord Robert Duddely sent him a message, that the Queen had granted him his first-fruits. He lived little more than two years after, and died, aged 81, living, as he promised the Archbishop, *quietly, though not coming up to the conformity required*, which had occasioned so much unquietness in others: and *perhaps relinquishing his parish before his death*. For he was buried not at St. Magnus, but St. Bartholomew's" (near the Royal Exchange).

Coverdale's connexion with the Puritans is established by an anecdote, related by Neal, History of Puritans, 8vo, Toulmin's edition, I. 204.

"But there were great numbers of the *common people*, who abhorred the habits as much as the ministers, and would not frequent the churches where they were used, thinking it as unlawful to countenance such superstitions with their presence, as if they themselves were to put on the garments. These were distressed where to hear; some staid without the church till *Service* was over, and the minister was entering upon his prayer before Sermon; others flocked after father *Coverdale*, who preached without the habits; but being turned out of his church at St. Magnus, London Bridge, they were obliged to send to his house on *Saturdays*, to know where they might hear him the next day. The government took umbrage at this, insomuch that the good old man was obliged to tell his friends, that he durst not inform them any more of his preaching for fear of offending his superiors."

Note IV., page 13.

The following is from the "Speech of the most Rev. Dr. CROLLY, Catholic Primate of all Ireland, at a Public Breakfast given at Belfast, to the Rev. Mr. Carlile, of Dublin, (a Presbyterian clergyman,) for his labours as a Member of the Board of National Education." (See Christian Reformer, for October, 1835, II. 722.)

"He (Dr. C.) was ready to subscribe to every thing that had been said by Mr. Carlile. He was, with his reverend friend, equally the friend of Bible instruction. It had been charged against the Catholic clergy of Ireland, that they were opposed to the circulation of the Scriptures. The accusation was, in every way, untrue. From their peculiar and unfortunate situation, the Catholic people of Ireland were unable to purchase Bibles; but this obstacle was fast being removed, by means of cheaper editions. For himself, he would say, that he (Dr. C.) had circulated more copies of the Old and New Testaments than any man in Ireland. He had got an edition printed entirely at his own expense. The Bible which formerly cost 18*s.* was now sold at 6*s.*; and Mr. Smyth and Mr. Mairs (Belfast Printers) could testify to the extent of copies which he had circulated. To Mr. Mairs alone, within a very short period, he had paid upwards of £1000. The Catholic prelates of Ireland have not been fairly represented in regard to biblical instruction. They are

men who will never allow the serpent of bigotry to coil itself round the tree of knowledge; and they will never be satisfied till the seeds of knowledge and the principles of charity and good-will to all men shall spread over the whole land, fertilising the human mind, and producing the fruits of knowledge and power."

Note V., page 17.

While I hail the Bible Society, in its original integrity and purity, as a noble institution, I am not insensible to the frequent deviation, at its public meetings, from its truly liberal spirit. The Protestant principle on which it is founded has been, however, generally asserted by its members, against the exclusive and sectarian projects of certain zealous Trinitarians, whose rival society is but feebly supported.

I have great pleasure in referring the reader to an 8vo pamphlet, published by Simpkin and Marshall in 1829, entitled, "The Spirit of the Bible Society favourable to Catholic Emancipation: an Address to the Members of that Institution, stating and enforcing its Constitutional Principle, which is Religious Charity, &c. By a Member of the Establishment." The following passages of this truly Protestant "Address" are peculiarly interesting at the present moment, and I take the opportunity of quoting them to make my acknowledgments to the unknown author for the presentation of a copy.

"I am only attempting to describe the effects of that sectarian spirit, which is not *exclusively* the spirit of those who are usually classed under the denomination of sects, but is possessed, it must be acknowledged, in a degree by ourselves; and from it naturally spring those antichristian feelings to which I have just alluded, and of which vain-glory and ambition are not perhaps the least conspicuous or the least injurious, though they pass current under the imposing name of zeal. The pernicious influence of the spirit I am alluding to, is sometimes carried to an extreme, though not generally so, I conceive, in any party whatever. But where I see a knot of individuals keeping aloof from the rest of their fellow-creatures, listening with admiration exclusively to a few favoured oracles of their own selection, there, I confess, I expect to find that

vain-glory and ambition, with all the solemnity of pharisaical humility, are building on high their aspiring nests. Willingly acknowledging the majesty of their Redeemer, and the depravity and insignificance of the human race in general, they perhaps cherish in their hearts a consciousness of their own partial election, a consoling conviction, that though all mankind are lost, yet they themselves are saved; that though the world at large labours under the dreadful wrath of Heaven, and is only fitted for destruction, they have a sensible experience of the indescribable blessedness of being the peculiar children of God; that while others, who have been so unfortunate as to build something upon the treacherous soil of honour, moral principles and integrity of conduct, will be consigned to the devouring flames, and shriek unpitied beneath the scourge of eternal vengeance, they, without any superior pretensions of personal merit, the very name of which is an abomination, will be received up in triumph to ineffable bliss. This is the system of thought which exclusive associations, when the spirit of exclusion is rigidly adhered to, have a tendency to encourage. It ventures to assume to itself the evangelical title of grace: but perhaps the subjects of it will hereafter be dismayed and confounded to learn, that the terms selfishness and presumption would have been more appropriate, much more accurately descriptive, of their real character and principle."—Pp. 20—22.

"Many of us entertain mistaken notions, errors and prejudices, in points of faith. We send out the Bible, thinking to preserve or obtain the ascendancy of our own peculiar views. We cannot all be right. God alone foresees the consequences of what we are doing. It is consolatory however to reflect, that the *cause of truth must ultimately triumph*, whatever be the fate of sects, parties, or even of establishments. The Bible is distributed without note or comment. The members of every establishment, and of every sect, have hitherto been required to interpret the Bible according to certain established opinions or authorised decisions, which have been pronounced by the party adopting them to be infallible rules of faith; and I believe in the Church of Rome, paramount to the written word. But in distributing the Bible without note or comment, you are virtually inviting the people to interpret for themselves.

When I consider, that while you do this with one hand, with the other you are pushing on the education of all classes of the people, it appears to me that the result is likely to be stupendous beyond what you, perhaps, have any idea of. In emancipating the Bible, and putting it into free and full operation, and at the same time accompanying it with the new and untried engine of general education, you are impelling machinery of immense and unimaginable powers, in whose future irresistible movements and circumvolutions your own prejudices, perhaps your own fondly-cherished opinions, your own dear peculiar ties, badges as you conceive them of evangelical or orthodox distinction, may be ground into chaff and dissipated for ever."—Pp. 36, 37.

Note VI., page 19.

The highest ecclesiastical authorities in the realm have, with few exceptions, been jealous from the beginning of "Improved Versions" of the Scriptures. Strype acknowledges Archbishop Whitgift's fears from King James's, the present received translation. His marginal note to the passage relating to the Archbishop's apprehensions, is as follows: "The Archbishop was not forward in a new translation, and why?" The pithy question is answered in a sentence which the biographer afterwards candidly quotes from a letter on this subject addressed by "the great linguist, Mr. Broughton," to the King: "That all this while the Bishops were unwilling their traps and pitfalls (as he called the old translation done by the bishops, very irreverently,) should be taken away, until his Majesty forced them to it."—*Life of Whitgift*, B. iv. Ch. xxxiii. pp. 588, 589.

Such as wish to see how many of our most learned divines have pleaded, hitherto without effect, for a revision of the Bible, may consult Archbishop Newcome's "Historical View of Biblical Translations." One of the writers whom he refers to, Dr. Symonds, inquires, with respect to the present acknowledged version, "Hath not the misrepresentation of *one word*" (he has in view 1 Cor. xi. 29) "driven thousands of well-meaning Christians from the Holy Communion? For the truth of this melancholy assertion we may

safely appeal to the masters of families, and to such as are concerned in Parochial cures."—*Hist. V.* p. 176. The Archbishop, in his own translation of the New Testament, substitutes the word *judgment* for the word *damnation* in the place specified. *Attempt* &c., II. 122.

Note VII., page 20.

The retention and use of the Three-Witnesses' Text by theologians is an offence against common honesty,—unless, indeed, it be sincerely believed (and there are minds of whom this may be predicated) to be genuine. The title of S. v. chap. xxxi. of Michaelis, Introd. New Testament, as translated by Dr. Marsh, the present Bishop of Peterborough, is not a little significant: "Of the reasons alleged for retaining 1 John v. 7, though the evidence of manuscripts, fathers and versions is decidedly against it." IV. 431. Michaelis not only justifies Luther for omitting the text in his German translation of the Bible, but condemns his successors who introduced it, as guilty of a species of fraud.

Dr. Monk, the present Bishop of Gloucester, has given an interesting account of Dr. Bentley's prælection on the text, in his Life of this eminent scholar (4to, pp. 347—351). Bentley professed to believe the doctrine for which the text is quoted; he studied the matter earnestly; and, says his biographer, "he concluded with a decided rejection of the verse." The Lecture was never published, and the MS. is *lost*, but Dr. Monk has collected and preserved the testimony of persons who heard the Lecturer or perused the original MS. Amongst these latter, was Dr. Vincent, the late learned Dean of Westminster. The Bishop of Gloucester extracts the following passage from a letter of his to the late Dr. Charles Burney, giving an account of some papers of Bentley's lent him by a relation of the great critic: "They consisted," says he, "of several sermons, or rather dissertations in form of sermons, all on learned questions: one on the three heavenly witnesses, was in Latin. It was not a *Concio ad Clerum*, but, as well as I remember, a sort of inauguration discourse as Professor of Divinity. Another was an argument to prove that the Epistle to the Ephesians was the last Epistle to the Laodiceans, and, *I think*, in English. What the remainder

consisted of I do not recollect: it is five and twenty years ago since I saw them. That on the Three Heavenly Witnesses, was a regular and historical narrative of the manner in which the context in this part of St. John was cited by different authors from the earliest date down to Erasmus, and a decided rejection of 1 John v. 7. Maintaining, however, the doctrine in its most orthodox acceptation. *To me it was conviction; and I have always felt the charge of Emlyn, who reproaches the Church of England for having, in her first translations, printed the verse in a different character, and afterwards dropping the character, and suffering the verse to stand without remark, like any other indifferent text.* The doctrine, as Bentley observed, did not stand in need of a false support; but this was doing evil that good might come of it."

The hard submission even of dignitaries of the Church to the Athanasian creed is notorious. I extract from the manuscripts of Mr. Jones, (the author of "Free and Candid Disquisitions,") deposited by his Will in Dr. Williams's Library, the following testimonies in his own hand writing:—"Athanasian Creed, 1759. An ingenious and learned gentleman (Mr. Sh.) lately told me, that he once asked the late Bishop of Winchester (Dr. Willis), with whom he was well acquainted, what his Lordship's opinion was of that Creed, the solidity of its doctrine, and the justifiableness of imposing it as a confession of our common faith. 'Sir,' said his Lordship, 'I will have no disputes with you upon this head. I will give you in one word my opinion of the matter. I am exactly of the same mind with Archbishop Tillotson: I wish the Christian Church were well rid of that Creed.' There was no room for further inquiry. The late Bishop of Rochester (Dr. Wilcox), being upon a Whitsunday with his family at the house of a Clergyman in N——shire, who had for some time omitted reading the Athanasian Creed in his Church, his Lordship's Chaplain, who was aware that this omission had given some offence, took a method of his own accord, and, as is reasonably supposed, not without consulting the Bishop, to remove the offence and abate the prejudice. He desired the Clergyman's permission to read the morning service of that day in his room. 'The favour of a sermon,' (said the Clergyman,) 'would be more acceptable.' 'But I choose,' (answered the Chaplain,) 'on

this day to read prayers, if you please, and may preach for you on another.' He read them, and omitted the Athanasian Creed, as the incumbent himself had usually done, the Bishop being present. This conduct had its proper effect upon the people."

"Many of the wiser and more thinking part of the clergy have been long sick of the Athanasian Creed, and have, by degrees, disused it in their churches; and many of the congregations, where it has been so disused, if by accident an officiating stranger should read it to them in its course, have been known to signify their surprise and dislike by very manifest tokens.—Of this I have been an eye-witness more than once."—*Archdeacon Blackburne's Works*, V. 491.

Note VIII., page 22.

For a correct and interesting account of the late Reformation-Jubilee at Geneva, I beg to refer to a report by my esteemed friend, the Rev. James Yates, who was present and assisted at the celebration, in the Christian Reformer for November of the present year, II. (N. S. 8vo.) 793—802.

Note IX., page 27.

The doctrine of transubstantiation is stated, if we may not say explained, in the recantation forced upon the learned Sir John Cheke by the Marian persecutors.

"I do profess and protest, that whatsoever mine opinion of the blessed Sacrament of Christ's body and blood, and of the sense of Christ's words spoken of the same, hath been heretofore; I do now, after conference had with certain learned men, your Majesties' chaplains, and especially the Right Worshipful Master, Dean of *Pauls*, believe firmly the real presence of Christ's very body and blood in the Sacrament, and *none other substance there remaining*: moved thereunto by invincible reasons of the Catholick Doctors against the *Arians*, of Christ's very true and natural being in us, and also by the consent of Christ's Catholick Church."—*Strype's Life of Cheke*, 8vo. p. 148.

I cannot refer to the unhappy fall of this distinguished man, who

fainted in the hour of trial, without quoting the generous comment of Archbishop Parker in a note on the margin of one of his recantations (for he was compelled to subscribe and pronounce more than one),—"Homines sumus—we are but men."—Ib. p. 166. See also p. 235.

Cheke's life was spared, but pining away with shame and regret, he died Sept. 13, 1557, aged 43.

The just and liberal views which this tutor of Edward VI. entertained of the Reformation are described in his "Discourse of Superstition," a translation of which, from the Latin, is inserted at the end of Strype's Life of the Knight. The Discourse is dedicated to Henry VIII. Speaking of "the opinion of ancestors," in reference to which he cites appositely 1 Pet. i. 18, Sir John says, "But if our fathers are to be followed, there is one who is our Heavenly Father, who is not only King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, but Father of fathers also, who ought chiefly to be followed. If our fathers are to be followed, why do we rather reckon on their numbers, than weigh their worth? Why do we rather take after the most in number, than wisest in understanding and most holy in life? It is not following the fathers, to imitate their faults; but to be willing to express their virtues and knowledge, propounded to our imitation, in our own life and endeavour."—He expatiates in glowing terms, towards the conclusion of the Discourse, upon the benefits of knowing the truth: "Your Majesty, who every day brings to light the defaced and oppressed parts of religion for the use of men, that things most wholesome and sound being by you discovered, may drive away these miseries of ignorance and error, and that true religion may, by degrees, shoot up till it arrive to full perfection and maturity. Thus shall ignorance give place to the knowledge of the Lord, the flesh offer less resistance unto holiness, the judgment of men shall prevail in civil causes, the word of the Lord shall bear the sway in religion, the custom of our forefathers shall assume nothing to itself, unless the force of truth do establish it, and the examples of nations shall not pervert the rule of life. So shall such things as are great, be esteemed for great, and light and trivial things be reckoned as they are. The imitation of our fathers shall not tend towards error; but the conservation of its own state will

tend to soundness. There shall be no confusion of things, but things of different natures shall be distinguished. So every thing shall go directly towards its end, and not be diverted some other way by the depravations of men's judgments. Thus regard will be had, not only what is done, but wherefore it is done; and things being joined with their causes shall not be rashly, and at hap-hazzard administered. And it shall be known for what end God hath appointed every thing, not whither our wills would hurry all things. That we may give praise and thanks unto God, and enumerate all his benefits; that we may perform that worship, which he prefers before all sacrifices and offerings and slaughterings of beasts; that we may remember the righteousness of God alone, and perpetually praise, and call upon his holy name, who only doth wondrous works."

Note X., page 32.

A great outcry has been lately raised against the Roman Catholics, on account of the republication of a system of theology by a writer of the name of Dens, in which the doctrine of persecution is asserted; and I must acknowledge that the heads of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland have not been able to acquit themselves entirely in this matter. They are certainly chargeable with great indiscretion. But while I admit this, I have great pleasure in laying before the reader two passages from Dr. Murray, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Dublin's Letter to the People of England, inserted in the Morning Chronicle of October 17, 1835:—"That the book of Dens is, in no sense of the word, a standard of Catholic belief, has been already proved so fully to the public, that any further argument on the subject would be wholly superfluous. Indeed, the author himself never for a moment contemplated such a distinction for his book. Whenever he discusses questions which are not of faith, (and the greater part of his work is composed of such questions,) he generally refers to the conflicting opinions of Catholic writers on the subject, and then assigns his reasons for inclining to the one side rather than the other. Those reasons which may seem to him to be cogent, may, and often do, appear to others to

have no weight whatever. Of this description is his opinion with regard to the punishment of heresy, which the Catholics of Ireland have many years ago disavowed. His opinion, therefore, in this respect, is so far from being a standard of our belief, that it is directly the reverse of what is taught and believed among the Catholics of Ireland."

"Persecution is not a tenet of the Catholic Church. Nay more; if it were, the whole hierarchy of Ireland would have long since renounced its title to the name of Catholic. For, on the 25th of January, 1826, thirty Catholic bishops, including three coadjutors, (that is, all the Catholic bishops of Ireland,) published a declaration, containing the following words:—'The Catholics of Ireland not only do not believe, but they declare upon oath they detest, as unchristian and impious, the belief that it is lawful to murder or destroy any person or persons whatsoever, for or under the pretence of their being heretics, and also the principle that no faith is to be kept with heretics.' Yet those bishops were Catholic, eminently Catholic, and it was their glory never to have swerved from 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' nor to have 'greedily run after the error of Balaam for reward.' It is absurd, then, to talk of persecution as a tenet of the Catholic Church."

The claim of the Church of England to the succession of her priesthood from the apostles, is clearly stated by the late Dr. Milner, Vicar Apostolic, in his "Letters to a Prebendary," pp. 356, 357. He remarks, "The importance that has been attached by the established clergy to the controversy concerning the Lambeth Register of Archbishop Parker's Consecration, from the time of Mason, two hundred years ago, down to that of Courayer, within in our own memory, may be also alleged in proof of the Church of England's opinion concerning the necessity of regular and uninterrupted succession in the sacred ministry, from Christ and his apostles." Note, p. 357. The story of Parker's consecration at the Nag's Head Tavern, in Cheapside, was pronounced by the historian of the Puritans "a fable," but he shews that there was some irregularity in the proceeding, and that the interference of parliament was necessary to silence doubts and remove objections.—Neal, I. 133, 134. Milner, before quoted, naturally enough reproaches the Church of

England with denouncing the Church of Rome as Antichrist, and at the same time admitting that her ministerial orders have been derived from the elder church.—Letters, p. 39, note. To escape from this dilemma, the hypothesis stated in the text of the sermon was suggested. It did not originate with the present Bishops of Salisbury and London, who have taken it under their patronage. Calvin wrote to Archbishop Parker, anno 1560, proposing an union of Protestants. His Grace "soon acquainted the Queen's Council with it. And they took it into consideration, and desired his Grace to thank Calvin, and to let him know" that "as to the government of the Church, the Church of England would still retain her episcopacy; but not as from Pope Gregory, who sent over Austin the Monk hither, *but from Joseph of Arimathea*, as appeared from Gildas, printed first anno 1525, in the reign of King Henry VIII., and so far agreeing to Eleutherius, sometime Bishop of Rome, who acknowledged Lucius, King of Britain, Christ's Vicar within his own dominions: all this being before Rome usurped over princes." —*Strype's Life of Parker*, Book II., Chap. ii., p. 69. An extract from one of Calvin's books, in the next page of this work, shews, according to the biographer's marginal note, "Calvin for Episcopacy."

Note XII., page 44.

See Exposition de la Doctrine de l' Eglise Catholique, (Paris, 1680,) p. 136, and Hist. des Variations, (Paris, 1730,) II. 455.

Note XIII., page 45.

The question of Luther's opinion concerning the sleep of the soul, is thoroughly discussed in Bayle, (art. Luther, notes E and DD,) and in Archdeacon Blackburne's Historical View, Chap IV.; and his estimate of the Epistle of St. James is treated of in Bayle, (ut sup.,) note NN, and in Roscoe, Leo X., IV., 71, note B.

The dissensions amongst the Reformers were lamented by Calvin. Roscoe, ut sup. I. 92, and Hist. des Variations, I. 92, 93. The persecution of the English Exiles by the Lutherans, is described with great warmth by a writer quoted by Bayle, art. Westphalus, note K. And the temper of the Lutherans towards the Calvinists is set forth by Brandt, Hist. Ref., II. 690.

According to this last writer, I. 347, Calvin himself was "suspected of heterodoxy" upon the articles of "the Trinity and the divinity of Christ"!

Note XIII. [XIV.], page 48.

For an account of the early Unitarians, I refer the reader to the "Historical Introduction" to my friend Dr Rees's "Racovian Catechism." He has long promised the public a full history of these Reformers, and it is to be earnestly hoped that his health and leisure may enable him soon to redeem his pledge.

Note XV., page 50.

Gibbon calls Erasmus "the father of rational theology."—X. 192, p. 38. His love of peace and concord was a great sin in the judgment of bigots, Protestant as well as Catholic: the Spanish soldiers, set on by a monk, pulled down his celebrated statue at Rotterdam, and the clergy (the Reformed) endeavoured afterwards to procure its removal.

Note XVI., page 52.

Bishop Jewel, who will be acknowledged to be a great Protestant authority, lays down thus strongly the principle of the Reformers: "We receive and embrace all the canonical scriptures both of the Old and New Testament;—we own them to be the heavenly voices by which God hath revealed his will to us;—in them *only* can the mind of man acquiesce; in them all that is necessary for our salvation is abundantly and plainly contained; they are the very might and power of God unto salvation; they are the foundations of the apostles and prophets upon which the Church of God is built; they are the most certain and infallible rule, by which the Church may be reduced, if she happen to stagger, slip or err, by which *all ecclesiastical doctrines ought to be tried; no law, no tradition, no custom, is to be received or continued if it be contrary to Scripture:* no, though St. Paul himself, or an angel from heaven, should come and teach otherwise."—*Vindication of the Church*, p. 178, quoted by Archdeacon Blackburne, Works, V. 211, 212.

Archbishop Cranmer argued well for the free use of English Scriptures against the Cornish Rebels' Articles.—*Strype, Mem.* App. 108.

Note XVII., p. 55.

This whole matter is well stated by Sismondi, Histoire des Français, XVI. 369, 374. He says of the Reformers, "ils travailloient à substituer l'infallibilité de la Bible à celle du Pape." He argues conclusively, that in the Church there can be only two principles, Authority and Liberty.

It is sickening to see Protestant Dissenters using the language of infallibility, and throwing about the term "heresy" and the phrase "fatal heresy." This is a practical denial of the Protestant principle. Yet the offence is chargeable upon the two Independent Ministers who lately visited the United States as Ecclesiastical deputies. (See Reed and Matheson's Narrative, &c., in 2 Vols. 8vo.) I say nothing of their gross misrepresentations of Unitarians; they may have been imposed upon, though, I fear, not unwillingly; but I cannot refrain from asking for their authority for unchristianizing a large body of their fellow-christians, because they do not adopt the Congregational Creed, either the old or the new? The Unitarians are censured by these writers for not carrying far enough the principle of religious liberty!

Note XVIII., page 57.

See Gibbon X. 191, Note 36; also Roscoe, Leo X., IV. 86, 87, Note *a*. The latter historian concludes a candid estimate of the Reformation, with the admission, "that the important object which the friends and promoters of rational liberty had in view, has hitherto been but imperfectly accomplished, and that the human mind, a slave in all ages, has rather changed its master, than freed itself from its servitude." Ib. 88.

The incompleteness of the Reformation and the inconsistency of Protestants are freely exposed by Gilbert Burnet in the Preface to his Abridgement of his father, the Bishop's, Third Volume of the History of the Reformation, 12mo. 2nd edition, 1728.

"Certainly our Reformation, as happy as we are in what we enjoy of it, was never yet perfected; nor ever can be, till we all come openly to acknowledge, and to act consistently with that principle, which was the only ground upon which the Reformation did or

could stand; viz. that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith to Christians, and that every Christian, as he is to answer to God for his own actions, and not others for him, so is he to judge for himself, how he is to act in matters of religion, and not others to judge for him. Where this principle does not prevail, there popery still remains, though it pass under the name of Protestantism. And till this principle does prevail, we can expect and hope for no completion of that Reformation, which as yet can only be said to have been happily begun amongst us."

One who had felt the grievance of subscription to human articles of faith, thus poured out his complaint: "The subscription of so many ministers every year to articles of religion which many of them understand not, and many others of them believe not, (both of which have been charged upon them in print very lately,) affords such suspicions of impenetrable stupidity, voracious avarice, and prostituted conscience in the subscribers, as will unanswerably fix upon the Church of England, as long as this state of things shall last, all that odium and contempt which reasonable and upright men have for arbitrary impositions, and mean and sordid submissions to them." —*Archdeacon Blackburne, Works*, II. 123.

The same sentiments were expressed boldly by Dr. Conyers Middleton, in the "Introductory Discourse" to his "Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers," pp. lxxxvi, lxxxvii: "Our first and principal Reformers, in the reign of Henry VIII., had not the power to carry the Reformation so far as they desired; nor to make such changes in the old worship, as put them under a necessity of discarding the authority of the primitive Fathers; but on the contrary were obliged against their wills to comply still with many rites and doctrines; which had no other foundation, but in that authority; which, therefore, in those circumstances, they were forced to assert and defend. For how much soever they might be disposed to abolish such rites and the authority too on which they stood, they were restrained by the will of an arbitrary Prince, who would not suffer them to take the least step but by his immediate direction, and from his high conceit of his theological learning, gave the law even to his Bishops, in all the religious disputes of those days; and whose chief view after all was, to banish rather the power, than the religion of the Pope out of his realm."

Note XIX., page 57.

One of the greatest orators of the present day has borne the following testimony to the reformed state of the educated Roman Catholics of Ireland: "If that consummation which you desire (the conversion of the Irish people to Protestantism,) was ever to take place, it would be, not by individual conformity, but by prejudice being removed from the great body of the people insensibly—by a change occurring without their knowing it is in progress. The educated Roman Catholic in Ireland, of this day, is no more like the Roman Catholic of a hundred years ago than I am like a Protestant of that period. The Roman Catholics of the two periods are totally different beings. The present Roman Catholic as compared with the Roman Catholic of former times, might be considered a very good Protestant."

Lord Plunkett's Speech in the Debate on the Irish Church, in the House of Lords, Aug. 24, 1835.

N. B. The author perceives, when it is too late for correction, that there is an error or two in numbering the Notes. The two first paragraphs in Note X. should have formed Note XI., and in p. 45, there should have been a reference to Note XIII.

G. SMALLFIELD, PRINTER, HACKNEY.

AN ATTEMPT

TO

DELINEATE THE CHARACTER

OF THE REV.

WM. ELLERY CHANNING, D.D.

OF BOSTON, IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Lately Deceased,

AS A WRITER, PHILANTHROPIST AND DIVINE;

IN

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE NEW GRAVEL-PIT MEETING-HOUSE, HACKNEY,

ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1842.

BY

ROBERT ASPLAND.

WITH AN APPENDIX, CONSISTING OF EXTRACTS FROM DR. CHANNING'S WORKS, And Notes.

LONDON:
JOHN GREEN, 121, NEWGATE STREET.
1842.

PRINTED BY C. GREEN,
HACKNEY.

PREFACE.

The following Sermon would not have appeared in print, but for a vote of the Congregation, passed at a meeting held in the Chapel immediately after its delivery, requesting that it might be published at their charge. To them it is now given by the preacher, as a small token of gratitude for the steady kindness which he has experienced from them during a pastorship of nearly forty years.

Those that heard the Sermon will see that a few passages from Dr. Channing's Works which were brought into it, are now placed in an Appendix, with some others which had been prepared for delivery, but were excluded from want of time. The numerous Extracts * increase the bulk of the publication; but the author makes no apology for introducing them, since they constitute, he fears, its only merit. Such as have not Dr. Channing's Works will be interested in these Selections; and such as are familiar with them will, it is hoped, be pleased at their being made known to others.

A few paragraphs will be found in the Sermon, which were also omitted for the sake of brevity.

If any reader should regret the preacher's notice of Dr. Channing's opinion of Dr. Priestley, he is requested to bear in mind that the Sermon was preached before a congregation once

* In these, and in the references, I use the edition of Dr. Channing's Works printed and published in 1840, in 5 volumes post 8vo, by the Messrs. Hedderwick, of Glasgow. This neat edition, the accuracy of which is creditable to the printers, was put out under the sanction and revision of Dr. Channing, as he himself avows in a general Preface to this collection of his Works.

honoured with Dr. Priestley's ministry, and still jealous of his reputation. This I observe particularly in reference to any of my American brethren who may happen to see this humble attempt to delineate the character of Dr. Channing, "whose praise is in all the churches" of our denomination, but more especially in those of his native land, to the members of which he was personally known,—by whom, as a necessary consequence, he was beloved and revered.†

*** The reader is requested to supply a few words inadvertently left out of the sentence, p. 18, twelve lines from the bottom, and, by the substitution of "that" for "when," line 11, to read the sentence, —"what prospects for the human race does it not unveil when the time shall come (as come it will) that mankind," &c.

† While I am revising this sheet for the press, several of the American periodicals are put into my hands, containing most appropriate and pathetic expressions of the loss felt by the Unitarians of that country, in the death of Dr. Channing. Some of the writers happily describe his intellectual character and moral influence in a few words. The "Christian Examiner" for the present November, says, (p. 232,) "he first clothed the liberal theology with its appropriate light and beauty." The "Monthly Miscellany" (Mr. Gannett's) for the same month, says, p. 276, in a beautiful adaptation of a verse in one of the Gospels, "His eye was single, and therefore his whole body was full of light" Both writers have naturally applied to the Deceased the image represented in the text of the following Sermon.—I see that the same text was taken by my esteemed friend Mr. Madge, in his Sermon preached at Essex Street on this melancholy occasion and since published, which is tenderly respectful to Dr. Channing's memory, and abounding in manly life and vigour.

A SERMON, &c.

JOHN v. 35:

HE WAS A BURNING AND A SHINING LIGHT.

THESE are the words of our Lord, spoken of John the Baptist, in reproof of the Jews, who in a degree and for a time professed regard to that prophet, but generally neglected or despised his testimony to the Messiah, the Son of God. "He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

The image of Light, as the emblem of Truth, has been familiar to mankind in all ages and places. It is a fit symbol, especially, of Divine Truth, and was adopted by the sacred writers and dwelt upon by our Lord to shew the enlivening, purifying and saving influence of revealed religion.

John the Baptist was "a burning and shining light," inasmuch as he was a zealous preacher of truth and righteousness, who by his earnestness, courage and perseverance enforced his holy and heavenly doctrine upon sluggish minds and reluctant wills.

His words enkindled the earliest light over the head of our Lord, and called men to behold and rejoice in this glory of Israel. With a generosity prompted by piety, he described Jesus as the rising, himself as the setting sun. Our Lord received his approving testimony with calm

satisfaction, knowing that he was designated by the sacred voice of Prophecy as his forerunner, and was raised up to be the herald of the new dispensation. Presently, this bright and morning star was extinguished in blood; but the Truth that it was given to him to reveal did not die with him. Our Lord appealed to it as a standing condemnation of his own people. The doctrine was from heaven, but they would not receive it, preferring darkness to light because their deeds were evil, and their consciences were at ease only whilst no light broke in to expose and reprove them.

Looking back upon the Baptist as a martyr for God's truth, Jesus pronounced him great and equal to the greatest of the prophets, "a burning and a shining light."

With all his humility, our Lord did not scruple to appropriate the same image, and to represent himself as the Light of the world, placed in his sphere by Him who is the Source of light, to diffuse spiritual knowledge, to quicken moral fertility, and to revive and spread throughout the earth holiness, peace, love, hope and joy, and thus to cause them that were once darkness to be now "light in the Lord," "children of light and of the day." This was his great and glorious mission, and he imparted from the spirit poured without measure upon himself, abundant grace to his disciples, who, thus qualified, went forth shining as lights in the midst of a dark world, and holding out the word, the lamp, of life to the benighted nations. A flood of light has ever since streamed upon mankind, struggling with darkness, breaking through clouds, dispersing mists, and promising more and more to fill the earth with the glory of the Divine goodness.

The great lights of the firmament are immoveable in their spheres and unvarying in their course, but are sometimes eclipsed and obscured to mortal eyes; so Divine

Truth, although it be inextinguishable and eternal, is sometimes withdrawn and hidden, to such a degree as to seem to be lost, to some one age or people. The heralds of Truth are, like John the Baptist, mortal, and when they escape the deadly wrath of tyrants, fall beneath the scythe of Time. "The Fathers—where are they? And the Prophets—do they live for ever?"

Wisely as the Provident Creator has adapted the body and the spirit to each other, it has, nevertheless, seemed good to Him, for moral ends, to permit an occasional incompatibility,—as when the mental powers are too large and active for the bodily, or the bodily powers are of strength to master the mental. "For," according to the Wise Man,* "the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things." This is a humbling fact in the economy of our nature. The apostle Paul, however, turns it into an argument for piety, by that divine alchemy through which the baser elements of our being are transmuted into spiritual wealth. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure (this golden light) in earthen vessels (or lamps), that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."† The lamp is fragile; but the light is ever burning. This is "the excellency of the power" of mind, of the might of truth. All is from God, and to him be the glory;—but he condescends to communicate his own spirit to his creatures, to some of them plenteously, and their piety consists in letting their light shine before men in good and noble works which reflect honour from earth to heaven. With this devout feeling, the Son of God, who was "the brightness of the

* Wisdom, ix. 15. † 2 Cor. iv. 6, 7.

Father's glory," explaining the reason of his miracles of mercy, declared,—reverentially with regard to his Heavenly Father, boldly with regard to mankind,—"I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."* After his example, his faithful servants will study and strive to use their several talents, whilst they have their portion under the sun, for the highest good and the lasting improvement of themselves and their fellow-creatures. One after another, they die, the wisest and best no less than others; but their wisdom and virtue speak after death, and they themselves go to their reward, "the inheritance of the saints in light," and "their works do follow them:" for "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."†

You, my Christian hearers, have naturally anticipated the application of these few plain remarks to the object of this service, which is to commemorate the talents and virtues of the late Rev. Dr. Channing, and especially his incomparable services to Freedom, Humanity, Social Improvement and Christian Truth. "He was a burning and a shining light."

I ventured to announce, and have entered upon, the service, as well from the suggestions of friends whose opinion and wishes ought always to weigh with me, as from the impulse of my own feelings. The duty has, I confess, caused me unwonted anxiety, lest I should be judged unequal to it, and lest I should be thought arrogant in thus seeming to associate myself with one to whose name indeed I look up reverentially, but with whom I had little

* John ix. 3, 4. † Dan. xii. 3.

personal acquaintance and no epistolary correspondence. I should hereafter have reproached myself, however, if even on these grounds I had shrunk from the call to pay a tribute of respect to a departed Christian brother, who as a teacher and a writer has done so much for the world and the church, and particularly for our denomination, as Unitarian Christians.

In one respect, I am conscious that I am the better for the exercises of my mind on this occasion. Until I had again read a large portion of Dr. Channing's works, in order to gain a just conception of his mind and character, I did not know how much I loved the one and admired the other. I will further confess that I now seem to myself not before to have done justice to his varied and incomparable excellence. I had viewed him too much in connexion with the strife and tumult of his excited nation, without reflecting sufficiently that if he often stood in the breach between contending parties, it was to allay, not to enkindle animosity; to restore peace, not to prolong or exasperate warfare; and that he spoke and wrote, not as a partizan, but as a Christian patriot and a Christian monitor, who had the rare impartiality and intrepidity to point out and rebuke errors and faults on every side. He now speaks from the Tomb, and his voice comes to us, not only mellowed by distance, but also sanctified by the grave. We think of him as a disembodied spirit, looking benignantly down upon us from the eternal world. The thought has the same moral influence as one of our great poets felt in contemplating a churchyard:*

> Hark! how the sacred calm, that breathes around,
> Bids ev'ry fierce tumultuous passion cease;
> In still small accents whisp'ring from the ground,
> A grateful earnest of eternal peace.

* Note A.

It is not in my power to lay before you a biographical memoir of Dr. Channing. His life, in all its interesting detail, will no doubt be given to the world in due time, by some one competent to the important task. My aim is to sketch his character, chiefly as it appears in his writings, and to set forth his opinions on the great topics that divide Christendom, for the most part in his own strong and beautiful language. The extracts that I shall read will not, I am sure, be thought too many or too long by any that can estimate either the masculine intellect or the benign spirit that shine forth in the words of this master in our Israel. I am about to bring him before you in his own character, and not to offer up the incense of adulation at his shrine: if ever the common-places of funeral eulogy would be inappropriate, they would be so felt by every man of judgment and taste in a service dedicated to the memory of Channing. Nor in the remarks that I shall make upon him, shall I deem it inconsistent with profound respect and glowing affection to point out a few particulars in which I humbly think he was not superior to our common imperfections.

Dr. Channing died on Sunday, October 2nd, in the 63rd year of his age, after a month's illness, amidst the mountains of the State of Vermont, whither he had gone in pursuit of health. His bodily frame had long indicated weakness, which indeed partially disabled him for the duties of the pulpit. Most of his works appear to have been written under infirmities which would have justified most men to their own minds in a course of inaction and silence. His was one of the examples to which I have already alluded, of the mastery of mind over matter, of the spirit over the body. There was no apparent infirmity, but rather increasing light and power, in his successive writings.

Dr. Channing was a native of Rhode Island, and received

his elementary education, together with his first religious impressions, at Newport, in that small State, from some eminent divines who were more or less Calvinistic, traces of whose influence may be perceived both in his character and in his metaphysical speculations. After the change of his religious views, he still delighted in their memory, and expatiated with peculiar satisfaction on their intellectual powers and high moral qualities.*

Like all men of strong and susceptible minds, Dr. Channing was warmly attached to his native place, and dwelt with enthusiasm upon the scenes of his early life. Rhode Island, the Isle of Wight of the United States, was the usual place of his summer residence after his health required relaxation and change of air. One of his published Sermons (on "Christian Worship") was preached at the Dedication of an Unitarian Congregational Church at Newport in this island, and throughout it he appears to breathe his native, life-inspiring air, and to have all his sympathies called forth into delightful exercise. At the conclusion of this admirable sermon, delivered July 27, 1836, he says, in a passage which I quote, not merely on account of its lively description of natural scenery, or of the tender moral sentiments which it expresses, but also from its throwing light upon Dr. Channing's whole mind, to which nature always appeared as a Holy Mount, whence the soul should ascend to God:—

"It is with no common emotion that I take part in the present solemnity. I stand now to teach, where in my childhood and youth I was a learner. The generation which I then knew has almost wholly disappeared. The venerable man, whose trembling voice I then heard in this place,† has long since gone

* Note B.

† He appears to refer to Dr. Ezra Styles.

to his reward. My earliest friends, who watched over my childhood and led me by the hand to this spot, have been taken. Still my emotions are not sad. I rejoice; for whilst I see melancholy changes around me, and still more feel, that time, which has bowed other frames, has touched my own, I see that the work of human improvement has gone on. I see that clearer and brighter truths than were opened on my own youthful mind, are to be imparted to succeeding generations. Herein I do and will rejoice.

"On looking back to my early years, I can distinctly recollect unhappy influences exerted on my mind by the general tone of religion in this town. I can recollect, too, a corruption of morals among those of my own age, which made boyhood a critical, perilous season. Still I must bless God for the place of my nativity; for as my mind unfolded, I became more and more alive to the beautiful scenery which now attracts strangers to our island. My first liberty was used in roaming over the neighbouring fields and shores; and amid this glorious nature, that love of liberty sprang up, which has gained strength within me to this hour. I early received impressions of the great and the beautiful, which I believe have had no small influence in determining my modes of thought and habits of life. In this town I pursued for a time my studies of theology. I had no professor or teacher to guide me, but I had two noble places of study. One was yonder beautiful edifice, now so frequented and so useful as a public library, then so deserted that I spent day after day, and sometimes week after week, amidst its dusty volumes, without interruption from a single visitor. The other place was yonder beach, the roar of which has so often mingled with the worship of this place, my daily resort, dear to me in the sunshine, still more attractive in the storm. Seldom do I visit it now without thinking of the work which there, in the sight of that beauty, in the sound of those waves, was carried on in my soul. No spot on earth has helped to form me so much as that beach. There I lifted up my voice in praise amidst the tempest. There, softened by beauty, I poured out

my thanksgiving and contrite confessions. There, in reverential sympathy with the mighty power around me, I became conscious of power within. There struggling thoughts and emotions broke forth, as if moved to utterance by nature's eloquence of the winds and waves. There began a happiness surpassing all worldly pleasures, all gifts of fortune, the happiness of communing with the works of God. Pardon me this reference to myself. I believe that the worship, of which I have this day spoken, was aided in my own soul by the scenes in which my early life was passed. Amidst these scenes, and in speaking of this worship, allow me to thank God that this beautiful island was the place of my birth." *

He indulges himself in the same pleasing strain, in the conclusion of his celebrated Letter, protesting against the "Annexation of Texas" to the United States, written amidst the scenery which first attracted, delighted and exalted his youthful spirit. A political subject, regarded by all parties with feverish anxiety, might have been expected to excite comfortless feelings in his bosom, as it did in fact arouse his patriotic and virtuous indignation; but with all his zeal on behalf of justice and humanity, his mind was composed and serene and in harmony with the beauties of nature around him. On this as on other occasions, his habit of study was peculiarly favourable to freshness, purity and strength of mind: seeking only truth and virtue, he was accustomed, as he says in the words that follow, to consult the voice of the Creator in his works:

"I cannot but fear that the earnestness with which I have written may seem to indicate an undue excitement of mind. But I have all along felt the importance of calmness, and have seemed to myself to maintain it. I have prepared this letter, not amidst the goadings, irritations and feverish tumults of a crowded city, but in the stillness of retirement, amid scenes of

* Works, IV. 338—340.

peace and beauty. Hardly an hour has passed, in which I have not sought relief from the exhaustion of writing, by walking abroad amidst God's works, which seldom fail to breathe tranquillity, and which, by their harmony and beneficence, continually cheer me, as emblems and prophecies of a more harmonious and blessed state of human affairs than has yet been known."*

Dr. Channing pursued his academical studies in Harvard College, Cambridge, near Boston, Massachusetts, where he distinguished himself and graduated with honour. Here his originally active mind was excited to exercise, and by exercise learned its own great capacity. He was in a school favourable to the cultivation of both his intellectual and moral nature. Its professors encouraged inquiry and freedom of thought and language, on all subjects. Divinity was studied without human creeds. No prescribed articles of faith bound and fettered the understanding: no denunciation, no menace cramped and bruised the heart. A race of distinguished scholars, divines and statesmen has been trained in this noble institution, which for its liberality, shewn by experience to be highly beneficial, may serve as a model to other schools which are accustomed to set up higher pretensions. Many of Dr. Channing's class-mates at college have like himself risen to eminence, amongst whom may be singled out Mr. Justice Story, a Jurist whose legal opinions are appealed to with respect on both sides of the Atlantic. With him Dr. Channing maintained a close intimacy throughout the whole of his life, as did also the late lamented Dr. Tuckerman, who was beloved by both.

On leaving the University, Dr. Channing appears to have been engaged for a period in tuition, after which he

* Works, II. 252, 253.

settled, soon after the commencement of the present century, as the minister of a large and wealthy congregation in Boston, which has been called the City of Unitarian Churches. Latterly, he enjoyed the benefit of a co-pastor in Mr. Gannett, who became so well known to us and was so much esteemed by us, on his late visit to England, of whom it is high but not undue praise to say that he was of congenial mind and character with his brother-minister, and in all respects a fit associate for him. Dr. Channing was from the first a distinguished preacher in a town and neighbourhood abounding with well-educated and highly-gifted pastors. Owing to the known solid virtues of his character, his ever-growing eminence was beheld by his clerical brethren, not only without envy, but likewise with lively sympathy. They were eager to acknowledge that his was "the path of the Just, a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Dr. Channing stands before the world as a Reformer, a political, a religious and a social reformer. Yet it was somewhat late in life that he stepped forward to combat theological error, denounce civil oppression and rebuke popular vices. It would seem that he was long carrying on the work of self-education, the only education which can make a man eminently good and great. In retirement he nursed his own thoughts, enlarged by exercise his intellectual capacity, and exalted and invigorated his spirit. He had been stationed for some time in the South of the United States, where he formed close intimacies, which he always willingly recognized, and in that pestilential air was habituated to the sight and sound of slavery, which for the time, it is said, he beheld with the indifference then prevalent amongst his countrymen, even of the New England States, which have always been happily exempt from this plague and reproach. But neither the civil

despotism of the South nor the Calvinistic rigour of the North could subdue his ever-active mind to lasting bondage. "While" he "was musing, the fire burned"—then spake he in a voice which has reverberated throughout America, throughout the British dominions, and, without hyperbole we may say, to the ends of the earth.*

Almost as soon as Dr. Channing addressed the world, he was recognized as one who by his gifts and graces was commissioned by Divine Providence to be an instructor and reformer. He made himself first known at home, at least throughout the extent of the land, by some stirring sermons on the second war with England, which, being of local and temporary interest, he has not brought, except by a few extracts, into his collected Works. His good reception as an author in the United States is not surprising, when we look at either the state of literature or politics, among that people, when he rose above the horizon; talents equal to his own were not absolutely necessary, in such an agitated period, to lift a writer into public notice: but knowing as we do, by painful experience, the power of prejudice, the fearful ascendancy of bigotry, and the arbitrary standard of taste in England, we may well wonder, while we rejoice, at his early popularity in the Old Country. The truth is, that he struck in with some of our strongest national feelings. He wrote a brilliant essay upon our Milton,—and Milton, although a Nonconformist, an Unitarian, a lover of religious liberty, and an ardent defender of a Commonwealth, is, like Locke and Newton, † who fall under part of the same description, of too valuable a name to our country's renown to be parted with. He wrote also a severe attack upon the late Emperor of the French, which was quite intelligible in a citizen of a republic, and a lover, moreover, of peace and a champion

* Note C. † See Extract I.

of national independence, but which was chiefly acceptable on this side of the water because it was an unmeasured condemnation of one whose name was, for a period, the symbol of opposition to a host of antiquated prejudices, and oppressions which were held justified by the length of their endurance. These two essays may be said to have created Dr. Channing's English reputation, but I venture to question whether they be not the precise works which of all his writings will have the shortest course with posterity. We of this place admire Milton for the many towering distinctions in which he is admirable,—we claim him as peculiarly ours,—but, with an able critic in one of the first periodicals of this country, we except to the canon, as leading to greater errors than its own, that Milton spoke unintelligibly to his contemporaries, expecting to be interpreted by the more enlightened men that should come after him. At the same time, we know what Dr. Channing meant, although his enthusiasm carried him beyond the bounds of ordinary sense, and agree with him that a pregnant mind like Milton's will suggest many thoughts in which successive ages of better-instructed men will find more and more wisdom. We fully agree, too, with Dr. Channing, that the mind and character of the late unfortunate Emperor of the French exhibit many features which wise and good men must condemn and abhor, and some which they must despise and consign to contempt; but we do seriously object to trying, judging and sentencing him alone by the Evangelical law, arraigned before which not even Washington himself (not to advert to more vulgar and narrow-minded heroes) would escape the verdict of guilty. For ever praised be Dr. Channing and all the philanthropists that expose to public reprobation the crime of War; but let us take care that our love of peace be not, unknown to ourselves, wedded to a faction, and engaged to

renounce one party for the sake of espousing another, not at all wiser or better.

A further cause of Dr. Channing's popularity in the British dominions was his free and bold and generous expression of his love of our country, which he delighted to call the Mother Country, his admiration of our political institutions, at which so many of us are disposed to cavil, his satisfaction in beholding the working of our civil incorporations, and his sympathy with our social manners, together with his frank acknowledgment of our full measure of science and learning.

Happy is it that his language was ours, and that he spoke amongst us as one of ourselves: and this leads me to say, that I think we are scarcely aware of the unspeakable importance of the English tongue being also that of the United States of America, and of large portions of men in all parts of the civilized and even of the uncivilized globe. Time will not allow me to do more than suggest the thought. What encouragement does it hold out to the reformer and the philanthropist, what duties does it not impose upon us who are at the well-spring of the English language and English literature, and what prospects for the human race when the time shall come (as come it will) when mankind universally shall feel it to be their dearest and highest interest to put away all error and welcome all truth!

These were, no doubt, reasons of his popularity amongst us; but alone they will not account for it, and especially for its long continuance, seeing that he was known to be, in the language of bigotry, "heretical," and to be the advocate of what most of the heads of churches in this country have always pronounced to be of all "heresies" the worst, viz. Unitarianism. His own share of the reputed guilt and shame of the "heresy," it is true, was

lessened by an early declaration of his not acknowledging Dr. Priestley as a theological leader, and by his appearing not to sympathize cordially with the English Unitarians, whom he for a time considered to be disciples of Dr. Priestley, in all his multifarious speculations, relating to education, economy, literature, science, national policy, and the interpretation of the Bible; though I have reason to believe that, as he learned to know us better, and to judge of us by our own professions, and not by the reports of unfriendly censors, he admitted that while we revere that eminent man for his piety and virtue, admire his sagacious and comprehensive intellect, and are grateful to him for his sacrifices and services to the cause of truth and freedom, we are not bound down to any article of his creed, and on some important topics dissent from his conclusions. Still, we cannot explain the favourable estimate of Dr. Channing's works in this country, without taking into account their peculiar and resplendent merits, in point of style and sentiment and logic. They constitute, in fact, an era in English literature. They have introduced a new style. The style is not perfect, or without defects; but experience proves that it is fitted for the present state of the public mind and taste, and also that while it falls in with that mind and that taste, it is an instrument for exalting and refining both. There are two characteristics of Dr. Channing as a writer, simplicity and fervour. His simplicity is beautiful. In his best works, he never uses a word but to express his meaning; and, amidst the inartificial construction of his sentences, his words fall, as if by command of a master, into their proper places. He gloried in being an Anglo-Saxon, and his language shews that he never lost sight of his ancestral derivation. He aimed not at what is called eloquence or oratory. These a man may sometimes unconsciously rise into, as he frequently did,

but no one can attain by study and art. The eloquent and oratorical by profession are the greatest corrupters of our language and style, and I fear these pretensions are sometimes set up to cover even worse purposes.—Another feature of his style is fervour, infused into it by the warmth and zeal of a powerful mind earnestly intent upon great objects. This quality of his writings has more than any other contributed to their large and extending influence. We love to be excited, especially in what we believe to be a good cause. But the earnestness and fervour of an honest writer may betray him into mistakes;—he may become mystical or dogmatical, and will easily fall into repetition. These faults, I humbly conceive, Dr. Channing was not able always to avoid; but, in spite of them, he is a masterly and beautiful English writer, and we can look to him for the

"Thoughts that breathe and words that burn." *

Dr. Channing's grandfather was one of the men, dear to the United States, and, now that passion is asleep, honoured in Great Britain, who signed the Declaration of American Independence; from birth and education, therefore, as well as from a sense of moral duty, he himself was a Patriot—not ours in this respect; but we, I trust, are so far above prejudice as to admire patriotism in the citizen of another country. He rejoiced in the free institutions of his nation, which still he loved to consider as mainly of English origin. Those institutions he wished to preserve and improve, and to preserve by improving. But his was not blind patriotism. He saw his country's errors and sins, and severely reproved them, with a view to the reformation and amendment of his countrymen. He raised his energetic voice against Intemperance, which through his and other praiseworthy efforts has, we are authorized to believe, ceased

* Note D.

to be a national vice in the United States. He denounced the insatiable thirst for gain, and especially great and sudden gain, which has hurried so many of his countrymen, as well as ours, into unprincipled commercial speculation and unwarrantable private expense. He delivered his own soul, by a solemn protest against those breaches of good faith, in several of the States, which have brought the reproach of all Europe upon the American name, and inflicted a severe blow upon the national credit. He exposed and condemned the turbulence of his people, which has so often hurried them into defiance of the laws, and stained their character by acts of rapacity and sanguinary violence. In particular, he saw and bemoaned the shame, the disgrace, the guilt of the United States—Slavery—and at length, when he felt that he had acquired the power to confront the iniquity, he stood up, like Elias the prophet, in the Wise Man's description, "as fire, and his word burned like a lamp:" truly was he in this respect, "a light shining in a dark place."

We of this nation can scarcely conceive the courage which it required, even in a citizen of the Northern States of America, to stand forth as the advocate of the slave—of his right not merely to freedom, but to education, to political power, to Christianity, and also to an equality with his brethren of another colour.* This Dr. Channing did, encouraging the friends of the negro, even whilst he reproved and endeavoured to check their errors. His best works and his last were upon this all-important subject. A month before his death and just before his last illness, in a retired village, he procured an audience to hear a lecture against Slavery, that is to say, on the first of August last, the anniversary of the emancipation of 800,000 slaves, in our West-India Islands—the contemplation of which

* Note E.

filled the bosom of this philanthropist with gratitude and delight, transported his affections to us who achieved this work of redemption at so much cost and with so much difficulty, and raised his pious feelings towards the equal Father of bond and free, who by signal acts of his Providence, as well as by the general scheme of his grace, proclaims deliverance to the captives. In this his last tribute to truth and freedom and the gospel, — a legacy to the Christian world,—he expresses, as with his dying voice, not only his great joy in reviewing this work of mercy, which in its results has thrown down all the evil prognostics of the foes to human liberty and advancement, but also the strong hope, which this noble example of right-doing fixed steadily in his breast, of the progressive improvement of the condition of mankind, and of the ultimate universal triumph of Reason, Justice, Purity, Truth and Love.*

Here, on a stirring political topic, Dr. Channing felt and spoke and acted as a Christian: this was in truth his great distinction: Christianity was incorporated into his soul, and love to Christ, which with him was inseparable from love to God and love to man, swayed all his thoughts and feelings, suggested his words, ruled his actions and determined his habits.

His religion placed before him the one great object of life, the spiritual improvement of his fellow-creatures, his brethren,—all being, in his estimation, brethren, that bear the image of God on their souls, a rational nature created for immortality.

Looking abroad into society, he saw and deplored the present low civilization of even the most refined nations: his desire was (in nearly his own words), to awaken a new conception and to impart a comprehension of the end and dignity of a human being, believing that in Christianity and

* See Extract II.

in the powers and principles of human nature, we have a promise of something holier and happier than now exists.

He viewed man as the possessor of a never-dying spirit, with infinite capacities; he contemplated Jesus Christ as raised up and qualified by the Almighty to work the regeneration of the whole species; and he placed an undoubted faith in the ultimate triumphs of Christianity, that is, in Christianity as he held and we hold it, the revelation of the One True God in the character of an Universal and Equally Merciful Father of all the children of men,—His children, and therefore under his everlasting blessing.

He may be described, in short, in the words applied by the Evangelist to an elder "Son of Consolation," as "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith;" and may it not be added, in the same sacred language, that through him "much people was added unto the Lord!"*

He was eminently a "spiritual man."† Often and on great occasions he seemed to act from impulse: but his impulses were all Christian. If after-thought led him to change his course, it was not that he had done wrong, but that more knowledge and correcter views enabled him to do better.

Under reserved manners, at least in the eye of strangers, there lay hidden deep sensibility. His warm sympathy with his friends burst forth whenever his heart was smitten by bereavements.‡

The limits of a sermon allow me only to glance at the services rendered by this departed Christian Monitor and Advocate to almost all the higher interests of mankind. No great and threatening evil rose up before his penetrating spirit which he did not immediately grapple with and labour and strive, as we have partly seen, to bring under and exterminate.

* Acts xi. 24, and iv. 36. † Note F. ‡ Note G.

Quick to see and able to trace the dangers of Ignorance, he pleaded with admirable power of argument on behalf of Education; meaning by Education not merely the elementary instruction of children, but the moral and intellectual culture of the man from the cradle to the grave, of which culture he held religion to be the best instrument.*

No feature in his character was more pleasing, as none was more marked, than his fellow-feeling with the Poor; whom he delighted to contemplate, not in their accidental earthly and temporal humbleness, but in their mental and moral capacities and their eternal destination. Hence he urged it upon the rich as the first of duties to provide, and if need were by labours and sacrifices, for the elevation of the mass of the people to ease and comfort, intelligence and virtue, and thereby to self-respect and to honour in the eye of the world. This philanthropic appeal, sometimes assuming the shape of solemn remonstrance, was prompted by his deep-seated reverence of human nature as the crowning work of the Creator, in the expression of which his language must seem extravagant to those that want the religious sense, and consequently view man disconnected from God.†

No one ever exceeded Dr. Channing in attachment to religious or, in his own phrase, spiritual liberty. His ardent desire of this great object emboldened him to brave reproach by setting his face against sabbatic rigour, and calling upon his fellow-christians to beware of human creeds, as the basest idols before which the mind of man can be bowed down.‡ In one of his latest writings, he has expressed his deep and full satisfaction in having contributed to hinder the fabrication of the yoke of bondage, with which at one period of his life the churches of New England were threatened by the rising spirit of intolerance

* See Extract III. † See Extract IV. ‡ See Extract V.

and persecution. Upon this service to humanity and religion alone, he modestly rests his claim to be remembered when he should be taken away.* For this and many great and lasting services to us all he *is remembered, and his memory is and long will be blessed.*

As a Christian minister, Dr. Channing "magnified his office," in respect not of its secular power and emolument, but of its duties, its moral and spiritual influence, its privileges, particularly its title to free discourse, and its authority, derived from the people and to be employed for their improvement. To his younger brethren in the ministry he was urgent in setting forth the demands of the age upon them, never hesitating to denounce an ill-instructed, slothful, proud, worldly and rapacious clergy, as the worst enemies both to the Church of Christ and to every civil community.

A prominent class of Dr. Channing's works are defences of Revealed Religion, called forth by the recent prevalence of scepticism, which, in spite of its lofty pretensions, he did not scruple to pronounce a narrow and degrading state of mind.† Swayed by his moral feelings, his love of what is beautiful in sentiment and generous in conduct, he dwelt most upon the internal evidences of Christianity, amongst which he gave the first place to the character of Jesus Christ,—original, unexampled, perfect and infinitely beyond the reach of man's invention. The idea of the Saviour, in all its loveliness and power, was indeed ever present to his mind, as the reason of faith and the motive to virtue.‡

It shews the force of Dr. Channing's mind, that on a subject so trite as the Evidences of Christianity, he writes with a novelty and freshness which attracts, enlivens and cheers the reader. None of his publications have been more widely spread, or have made a deeper impression

* Note H. † See Extract VI. ‡ See Extract VII.

upon the mind of at least Protestant Christendom. One of our periodical works, of great name, and equally distinguished by its ability and learning and its avowed hostility to all that is called "liberal" and especially in theology, brings into its pages extracts from Dr. Channing's tracts on this subject, not professing, at the same time, to review them, and pronounces the author "one of those men who are a blessing and an honour to their generation and their country."*

In vindicating the truth of the Christian faith, he manifests a becoming spirit of tolerance and mildness towards those unbelievers whom he regarded as honest and sincere. To many of us it appears strange that this temper of mind should be singular, seeing that no lesson is more frequently and earnestly inculcated upon us by Him whom the voice of Heaven commands us to hear in all things, than that, as his disciples, we must forbear all judgment, and much more all reproach, upon "them that are without" and that "follow not with us." In this point of discipleship, Dr. Channing stands forth as an example. Yet he was not always thus well-instructed in the principles of the heavenly kingdom. He worked himself out of prejudice and enlarged his heart by long and patient study of the new dispensation, and particularly of "the mind of Christ," of which in the end he so largely partook. When he visited England in the year 1823, he devoted one Sunday morning to the worship of this House of Prayer. It happened on that occasion that I read from the pulpit a Petition to Parliament, drawn up for signature by professed Christians, against the prosecution of unbelievers in our courts of law, in order to their punishment by the civil power. Of the expediency at least of this petition, which Dr. Parr, Mr. Roscoe, and I believe the late distinguished

* Note I.

Roman Catholic, Mr. Charles Butler, signed, and which the late Lord Holland cordially approved and Sir James Mackintosh loudly applauded, Dr. Channing expressed strong doubts; his sensitive Christian spirit being, I suppose, wounded by the gross attacks upon revealed religion then prevalent, and his piety being alarmed lest a plea against persecution should be misinterpreted into an apology for irreligion.* The incident may have led him to think more closely upon the subject,—the result he has again and again expressed in words of kindness which ought to prevail upon the unbeliever to study with impartiality and seriousness his able and in some respects original arguments on behalf of Revealed Truth.†

From the progress of his own mind and his position in the Church of Christ, Dr. Channing was a theological Controversialist,—a character which the careless, the timid, the worldly-minded and the sceptical are incapable of estimating aright, but which every Christian Minister who rises to any eminence and gains any influence in the society amidst which he moves, must of necessity assume occasionally, if a sense of duty impel him to take a part, however humble, in the great work of Christian reformation. As has been already stated, he was brought up amongst that class of Christians who, from their number and their long possession of the multitude, complacently take to themselves the denomination of the "Orthodox," i. e. men of the right opinion,—a denomination which begs every question in dispute, and implies no less than infallibility. Their system could not long hold his vigorous and fervid mind. He thought he saw truth elsewhere, he pursued it, he believed that he at length found it, and in the doctrine which the unthinking, the prejudiced and the intolerant

* Note J. † See Extract VIII.

brand and denounce as "heretical," his understanding gained satisfaction, his heart repose, and henceforth he professed, defended and rejoiced in it as "the wisdom of God and the power of God." From hard experience, he knew the oppressive, grinding influence of superstitious notions of religion, and he has described this state of mental bondage with the feeling of one into whose soul the iron had once entered. In his province of the Christian world, however, he fancied that he saw the fetters of the ancient spiritual tyranny relaxing their hold and beginning to fall, and he exulted in the prospect of the spiritual emancipation of his fellow-christians:* I say deliberately, *fellow-christians*, for whilst many were eager to unchristianize him and his brethren, he cheerfully gave the "worthy name" to all that received "Christ Jesus, the Lord." With unruffled temper, he looked benignantly upon those whose communion he had left, not from alienation of heart, but from the want on their part of a catholic spirit,—and as in Rhode Island he had paid a generous tribute of respect to the Calvinistic doctors, Styles and Hopkins, so towards the close of life, in an Ordination Charge at Northampton, Massachusetts, he did homage to the memory of President Edwards, whose name is the lasting honour of that town, from whom he differed, to the utmost latitude of difference, in both his theological and his metaphysical creed.†

One peculiarity there is in Dr. Channing as a polemical preacher and writer—that is, his habit of penetrating to the essence, instead of looking distantly at the forms, of doctrines, and of passing by mere texts,—which yet he has shewn, by a few passages in his works, that he could explain, however difficult, perspicuously and felicitously,—and laying hold of the moral spirit of theological systems.

* See Extract IX. † See Extract X.

This mode of argument is well adapted to persons of enlightened mind and cultivated taste, but is as yet, I fear, too refined for recovering the mass even of religious inquirers from speculative error, since their earliest and most fondly-cherished opinions are worked up with the spurious or mistranslated text and misinterpreted phraseology of the Bible.

He has declared that he shrunk from "a low and terrifying theology," and for the greater part of his public life, and in the vigour of his mental powers, he devoted himself to the illustration and defence of that faith which we, as Unitarian Christians, believe to be the pure gospel, and confide in as the sure means, under the Almighty Providence, of raising the human mind, rectifying the standard of morality, dispelling unreasonable fears, brightening the prospects of society, and exalting the children of men to "the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

Knowing by observation the firm grasp in which early prejudice holds strong minds, especially when they possess quick devotional sentiments, we must have sometimes wondered at Dr. Channing's embracing and avowing Unitarian Christianity. His first studies, his feelings, and, I apprehend, his probable temporal interest, stood in his way. His susceptible spirit dreaded reproach—his pious sensibility shrunk from disownment by the religious world —his political connexions, his philosophical speculations, kept him at a distance from all known Unitarians—and yet such was the power of the evidence of the Scriptures upon his noble mind and generous heart, that he was forced (by what he himself esteemed a happy compulsion) to take on him the misunderstood, misrepresented and reviled form of Christianity, known by the name of Unitarianism, and henceforward to uphold it by the strength of his intellect, illustrate it by his genius, and adorn it by his virtues.

So far was he from being subdued to the Unitarian faith by the authority of the great names in our communion, that an early assertion of his new opinions — his Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. Gannett—was accompanied by a note (before alluded to), harshly disparaging Dr. Priestley, and reflecting not kindly upon the English Unitarians as his disciples. For this he was sternly rebuked by Mr. Belsham, and more gently reproved by Mr. Cogan.* Nor did the passage escape without remonstrance in his own country. Yet it appeared and re-appeared in successive editions of the Sermon. When, however, Dr. Channing revised his Collective Works, selecting such as he desired to preserve, the obnoxious passage was silently dropped. Many of his friends and admirers wished, and some have expressed the wish, that he had magnanimously confessed that he had formed a hasty judgment and been betrayed into a wrong estimate of a man who, with some imperfections, was eminently great and singularly good, and entitled to peculiar reverence as one of the persecuted for righteousness' sake. After all, I am inclined to believe that Dr. Channing's declining to publish a retractation of a wrong opinion, injurious to a distinguished servant of God, was not the effect of pride or obstinacy, but of a natural distaste to make his judgment upon others a matter of discussion and of personal attack and defence.†

As Dr. Channing would not submit to any creed attempted to be imposed by mortal hands, so he abstained religiously from moulding his own opinions into a formulary for adoption by his fellow-christians. He meditated, I believe, a systematic exposition of his views in Moral Philosophy, on which it is rather to be wished than hoped that survivors may be favoured with his last thoughts, but he has left no work resembling a Body of Divinity. Yet

* Note K. † See Note L.

such as study his various publications in connexion, will, I apprehend, be surprised to observe how completely he has set forth Unitarian Christianity, in all its branches. In this respect he has left us little to regret or desire. The following passage shews what Unitarianism is, and let me say the faithful description of the doctrine is its best recommendation:

"Unitarianism has been made a term of so much reproach, and has been uttered in so many tones of alarm, horror, indignation and scorn, that to many it gives only a vague impression of something monstrous, impious, unutterably perilous. To such, I would say, that this doctrine, which is considered by some as the last and most perfect invention of Satan, the consummation of his blasphemies, the most cunning weapon ever forged in the fires of hell, amounts to this—that there is One God, even the Father; and that Jesus Christ is not this One God, but his Son and Messenger, who derived all his powers and glories from the Universal Parent, and who came into the world not to claim supreme homage for himself, but to carry up the soul to his Father, as the Only Divine Person, the Only Ultimate Object of religious worship. To us, this doctrine seems not to have sprung from hell, but to have descended from the throne of God, and to invite and attract us thither. To us, it seems to come from the Scriptures, with a voice loud as the sound of many waters, and as articulate and clear as if Jesus, in a bodily form, were pronouncing it distinctly in our ears."*

In many ably-argued and forcibly-written passages, he has shewn the unhappy tendency of the popular belief with regard to the Divine Nature, usually set forth under the Unhallowed Name,—which you know I always avoid uttering in the House of Prayer,—the effect of which upon the multitude is to take away the Spirituality of the Divine Essence and to lower the Perfections of the

* Works, III. 165, 166.

Father Almighty.* He often expatiates with glowing pleasure upon the agreement of Unitarianism with the lessons inscribed upon the broad volume of Creation.† Instructed and inspired from both Nature and Divine Revelation, he gained clear and bright perceptions of the Fatherly Character of God, which he constantly maintained has no sure foundation but in the Unitarian scheme of the gospel.‡ In support of this supreme principle of piety, he was not deterred by the expected frown of the religious world from laying bare the unreasonableness and pointing out the injurious tendency, in a moral and spiritual point of view, of the commonly-received doctrine of the Atonement, which has supplanted the evangelical doctrine of Reconciliation. This tenet, from its mysteriousness and its association in the view of its believers with all that is most solemn and awful in religion, and especially with the sense of personal salvation, has taken strong hold of pious minds, and weighed down and kept back from inquiry many whom on every other subject the like influences would not suffice to lock up in the bondage and darkness of fear. Dr. Channing appeals as well to their piety as their reason in confutation of the error, proving that it is subversive of the Divine attributes, and wholly inconsistent with the declared design of the mission of the Saviour of the World.§

This great and good man was well aware of the enmity and reproach which he should incur by his bold assertion of Unitarian principles, and, strong in the sense of Truth and Duty, fearlessly met the vulgar and passionate charges brought against our faith. In the spirit of the apostle Paul, he indignantly rebuked the intolerance which would withhold from us the Christian name.‖ Not without a feeling of

* See Extracts XI. and XII.

† See Extract XIII.

‡ See Extract XIV.; also Note M.

§ See Extracts XV. and XVI.

‖ See Extract XVII.

shame for the dishonour put upon our common religion by bigotry, he remonstrated with those who in their warfare against us strive ungenerously and unlawfully,* and even resort to weapons dipped in poison: I refer particularly to the accusation that Unitarianism provides no support in the awful hour of death; in refutation of which Dr. Channing appealed to experience,† as we now, alas! appeal with the same view to his own bright example; for his end was more than peace, he finished his course with joy.

Looking to this "burning and shining Light," which, blessed be God! death has not extinguished, contemplating his whole life, and marking especially its last scene, who would choose to say that ours is a cold and chilling system of faith, incapable of imparting warmth and vigour to the soul?

No small number of persons of all ranks and denominations, and in all parts of the world, have by means of Dr. Channing been delighted and improved, strengthened for Duty and helped on toward Heaven, who yet never thought, whilst reading him, of his being any other than a sincere, faithful and devoted servant of Christ; a plain proof that when Unitarian Christianity is set forth in its own beautiful simplicity and native fervour, and with meekness and love and the spirit of piety, it will manifest itself as "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

It has pleased the Supreme Disposer to bring the labours of this distinguished preacher of righteousness to a close. While we bow in submission, let us be piously thankful that we have been permitted "for a season to rejoice in his light," and that his heavenly spirit still shines with benign influence in the works which he has bequeathed to the world. Let us imbibe from him a pure and generous zeal for Divine Truth, and encourage one another with the

* 2 Tim. ii. 5. † See Extract XVIII.

prospects of the ascendancy and power of uncorrupted Christianity, which, with almost prophetic authority, he has set before us, to animate us with resolution and constancy to tread in his steps, as far as he trod in those of prophets and apostles, and, above all, of "the True and Faithful Witness," our forerunner in all righteousness and our guide to immortality.* And although we cannot forbear lamenting his death, and sympathizing with his surviving friends in his own country under this bereavement, be it permitted to us to take comfort from the persuasion that, according to his unfailing hope and joyful expectation, he is removed from the twilight of earth to the unveiled glory of heaven, where the innumerable multitude of the wise and good, from all ages and climes, rejoice in the day that is without night,—where spirits, cleansed from the impurities of earth, hold communion with Jesus, who is as a sun amidst the stars of light,—and where streams of light and love, flowing from the Everlasting Source of intelligence and goodness, illuminate and gladden all minds with knowledge, life and joy, which mortal eye hath not seen nor mortal heart conceived: upon which scenes of splendour and delight may the Almighty and Merciful Father grant us to open our eyes when we shall have closed them upon this transitory world! *Amen.*

* See Extracts XIX. and XX.

EXTRACTS.

I.—P. 16.

MILTON, LOCKE AND NEWTON.

It will be seen by the following passage from the "Essay on Milton," that Dr. Channing looked with as much pleasure as his fellow-believers in England, upon this Unitarian Triumvirate.

"We are unable within our limits to give a sketch of Milton's strong reasoning against the supreme divinity of Jesus Christ. We must, however, pause a moment to thank God that he has raised up this illustrious advocate of the long-obscured doctrine of the Divine Unity. We can now bring forward the three greatest and noblest minds of modern times, and, we may add, of the Christian era, as witnesses to that Great Truth, of which, in an humbler and narrower sphere, we desire to be the defenders. Our Trinitarian adversaries are perpetually ringing in our ears the names of Fathers and Reformers. We take Milton, Locke and Newton, and place them in our front, and want no others to oppose to the whole array of great names on the opposite side. Before these intellectual suns, the stars of self-named Orthodoxy "hide their diminished heads." To these eminent men God communicated such unusual measures of light and mental energy, that their names spring up spontaneously, when we think or would speak of the greatness of our nature. Their theological opinions were the fruits of patient, profound, reverent study of the Scriptures. They came to this work, with minds not narrowed by a technical, professional education, but accustomed to broad views, to the widest

range of thought. They were shackled by no party connexions. They were warped by no clerical ambition, and subdued by no clerical timidity. They came to this subject in the fulness of their strength, with free minds open to truth, and with unstained purity of life. They came to it in an age when the doctrine of the Trinity was instilled by education, and upheld by the authority of the Church, and by penal laws. And what did these great and good men, whose intellectual energy and love of truth have made them the chief benefactors of the human mind, what, we ask, did they discover in the Scriptures?—a triple divinity? three infinite agents? three infinite objects of worship? three persons, each of whom possesses his own distinct offices, and yet shares equally in the Godhead with the rest? No! Scripture joined with nature and with that secret voice in the heart, which even idolatry could not always stifle, and taught them to bow reverently before the One Infinite Father, and to ascribe to him alone, supreme, self-existent divinity."—*Works*, I. 58, 59.

II.—P. 22.

CONCLUSION OF LECTURE AT LENOX, AUG. 1, 1842.

"All the doctrines of Christianity are more and more seen to be bonds of close, spiritual, reverential union between man and man, and this is the most cheering view of our time. Christianity is a revelation of the infinite, universal, parental love of God towards his human family; comprehending the most sinful, descending to the most fallen; and its aim is to breathe the same love into its disciples. It shews us Christ tasting death for every man, and it summons us to take his cross, or to participate of his sufferings, in the same cause. Its doctrine of immortality gives infinite worth to every human being; for every one is destined to this endless life. The doctrine of the "Word made flesh" shews us God uniting himself most intimately with our nature, manifesting himself in a human form, for the very end of making us partakers

of his own perfection. The doctrine of Grace, as it is termed, reveals the Infinite Father imparting his Holy Spirit, the best gift he can impart, to the humblest human being who implores it. Thus love and reverence for human nature, a love for man stronger than death, is the very spirit of Christianity. Undoubtedly this spirit is faintly comprehended by the best of us. Some of its most striking expressions are still derided in society. Society still rests on selfish principles. Men sympathize still with the prosperous and great, not the abject and down-trodden. But amidst this degradation, brighter glimpses of Christianity are caught than before. There are deeper, wider sympathies with mankind. The idea of raising up the mass of human beings to intellectual, moral and spiritual dignity, is penetrating many minds. Among the signs of a brighter day perhaps the West-Indian Emancipation is the most conspicuous; for in this the rights of the most despised men have been revered.

"There are some among us at the present moment who are waiting for the speedy coming of Christ. They expect before another year closes to see him in the clouds, to hear his voice, to stand before his judgment-seat. These illusions spring from misinterpretation of Scripture language. Christ in the New Testament is said to come whenever his religion breaks out in new glory, or gains new triumphs. He came in the Holy Spirit in the day of Pentecost. He came in the destruction of Jerusalem, which by subverting the old ritual law and breaking the power of the worst enemies of his religion, ensured to it new victories. He came in the reformation of the Church. He came on this day four years ago, when through his religion 800,000 men were raised from the lowest degradation to the rights and dignity and fellowship of men. Christ's outward appearance is of little moment compared with the brighter manifestation of his spirit. The Christian whose inward eyes and ears are touched by God discerns the coming of Christ, hears the sound of his chariot-wheels and the voice of his trumpet, when no other perceives them. He discerns the Saviour's advent in the dawning of

higher truth on the world; in new aspirations of the Church after perfection; in the prostration of prejudice and error; in brighter expressions of Christian love; in more enlightened and intense consecration of the Christian to the cause of humanity, freedom and religion. Christ comes in the conversion, the regeneration, the emancipation of the world."

III.—P. 24.

REGARD TO VIRTUE AND RELIGION IN EDUCATION.

"The exaltation of talent, as it is called, above virtue and religion, is the curse of the age. Education is now chiefly a stimulus to learning, and thus men acquire power without the principles which alone make it a good. Talent is worshiped; but if divorced from rectitude, it will prove more of a demon than a god."—*Works*, II. 362.

IV.—P. 24.

REVERENCE OF HUMAN NATURE.

The following is the animated conclusion of the Sermon on the "Honour due to all men," a passage which opens to view the preacher's whole heart.

"In this discourse I have spoken of the grounds and importance of that honour or respect which is due from us, and enjoined on us, towards all human beings. The various forms in which this principle is to be exercised or manifested, I want time to enlarge on. I would only say, 'Honour all men.' Honour man, from the beginning to the end of his earthly course. Honour the child. Welcome into being the infant, with a feeling of its mysterious grandeur, with the feeling that an immortal existence has begun, that a spirit has been kindled which is never to be quenched. Honour the child. On this principle, all good education rests. Never shall we learn to train up the child, till we take it in our arms, as Jesus did, and feel distinctly, that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' In that short sentence is taught the spirit of the true system of education; and for

want of understanding it, little effectual aid, I fear, is yet given to the heavenly principle in the infant soul.—Again : Honour the poor. This sentiment of respect is essential to improving the connexion between the more and less prosperous conditions of society. This alone makes beneficence truly godlike. Without it, almsgiving degrades the receiver. We must learn how slight and shadowy are the distinctions between us and the poor ; and that the last in outward condition may be first in the best attributes of humanity. A fraternal union, founded on this deep conviction, and intended to lift up and strengthen the exposed and tempted poor, is to do infinitely more for that suffering class, than all our artificial associations; and till Christianity shall have breathed into us this spirit of respect for our nature, wherever it is found, we shall do them little good. I conceive, that in the present low state of Christian virtue, we little apprehend the power which might be exerted over the fallen and destitute, by a benevolence which should truly, thoroughly recognize in them the image of God.

" Perhaps none of us have yet heard or can comprehend the tone of voice in which a man, thoroughly impressed with this sentiment, would speak to a fellow-creature. It is a language hardly known on earth; and no eloquence, I believe, has achieved such wonders as it is destined to accomplish. I must stop, though I have but begun the application of the principle which I have urged. I will close as I began, with saying, that the great revelation which man now needs, is a revelation of man to himself. The faith which is most wanted, is a faith in what we and our fellow-beings may become, a faith in the divine germ or principle in every soul. In regard to most of what are called the mysteries of religion, we may innocently be ignorant. But the mystery within ourselves, the mystery of our spiritual, accountable, immortal nature, it behoves us to explore. Happy are they who have begun to penetrate it, and in whom it has awakened feelings of awe towards themselves, and of deep interest and honour towards their fellow-creatures."—*Works*, III. 315, 316.

V.—P. 24.

CREEDS.

"It is another and great objection to creeds, that wherever they acquire authority, they interfere with that simplicity and godly sincerity, on which the efficacy of religious teaching very much depends. That a minister should speak with power, it is important that he should speak from his own soul, and not studiously conform himself to modes of speaking which others have adopted. It is important that he should give out the truth in the very form in which it presents itself to his mind, in the very words which offer themselves spontaneously as the clothing of his thoughts. To express our own minds frankly, directly, fearlessly, is the way to reach other minds. Now it is the effect of creeds to check this free utterance of thought. The minister must seek words which will not clash with the consecrated articles of his church. If new ideas spring up in his mind, not altogether consonant with what the creed-monger has established, he must cover them with misty language. If he happen to doubt the standard of his church, he must strain its phraseology, must force it beyond its obvious import, that he may give his assent to it without departures from truth. All these processes must have a blighting effect on the mind and heart. They impair self-respect. They cloud the intellectual eye. They accustom men to tamper with truth. In proportion as a man dilutes his thought and suppresses his conviction, to save his orthodoxy from suspicion; in proportion as he borrows his words from others, instead of speaking in his own tongue; in proportion as he distorts language from its common use, that he may stand well with his party; in that proportion he clouds and degrades his intellect, as well as undermines the manliness and integrity of his character. How deeply do I commisserate the minister, who, in the warmth and freshness of youth, is visited with glimpses of higher truth than is embodied in the creed, but who dares not be just to himself, and is made to echo what is not the simple, natural expression of his own mind! Better

were it for us to beg our bread and clothe ourselves in rags, than to part with Christian simplicity and frankness. Better for a minister to preach in barns or the open air, where he may speak the truth from the fulness of his soul, than to lift up in cathedrals, amidst pomp and wealth, a voice which is not true to his inward thoughts. If they who wear the chains of creeds, once knew the happiness of breathing the air of freedom, and of moving with an unincumbered spirit, no wealth or power in the world's gift would bribe them to part with their spiritual liberty."—*Works*, II. 295—297.

VI.—P. 25.

SCEPTICISM NOT PHILOSOPHY.

"Scepticism is essentially a narrowness of mind, which makes the present moment the measure of the past and future. It is the creature of sense. In the midst of a boundless universe, it can conceive no mode of operation but what falls under its immediate observation. The visible, the present, is every thing to the unbeliever. Let him but enlarge his views; let him look round on the immensity of the universe; let him consider the infinity of resources which are comprehended in omnipotence; let him represent to himself the manifold stages through which the human race is appointed to pass; let him remember that the education of the ever-growing mind must require a great variety of discipline; and especially let him admit the sublime thought, of which the germ is found in nature, that man was created to be trained for, and to ascend to, an incomparably higher order of existence than the present, —and he will see the childishness of making his narrow experience the standard of all that is past and is to come in human history."—*Works*, III. 385, 386.

VII.—P. 25.

CHARACTER OF JESUS AND LOVE TO HIM.

"The character of Jesus was Original. He formed a new

era in the moral history of the human race. His perfection was not that of his age, nor a copy of the greatness which had long engrossed the world's admiration. Jesus stood apart from other men. He borrowed from none and leaned on none. Surrounded by men of low thoughts, he rose to the conception of a higher form of human virtue than had yet been realized or imagined, and deliberately devoted himself to its promotion, as the supreme object of his life and death. Conscious of being dedicated to this great work, he spoke with a calm dignity, an unaffected elevation, which separated him from all other teachers. Unsupported, he never wavered; sufficient to himself, he refused alliance with wealth or power. Yet, with all this self-subsistence and uncompromising energy, his character was the mildest, the gentlest, the most attractive, ever manifested among men. It could not have been a fiction; for who could have conceived it, or who could have embodied the conception in such a life as Jesus is said to have led, in actions, words, manners so natural and unstudied, so imbued with reality, so worthy of the Son of God?"—*Works*, III. 396.

"Another important branch of virtue, we believe to be love to Christ. The greatness of the work of Jesus, the spirit with which he executed it, and the sufferings which he bore for our salvation, we feel to be strong claims on our gratitude and veneration. We see in nature no beauty to be compared with the loveliness of his character, nor do we find on earth a benefactor to whom we owe an equal debt. We read his history with delight, and learn from it the perfection of our nature. We are particularly touched by his death, which was endured for our redemption, and by that strength of charity which triumphed over his pains. His resurrection is the foundation of our hope of immortality. His intercession gives us boldness to draw nigh to the throne of grace, and we look up to heaven with new desire, when we think, that if we follow him here we shall there see his benignant countenance and enjoy his friendship for ever."—*Works*, III. 97.

VIII.—P. 27.

TREATMENT OF UNBELIEVERS.

"Not only has Christianity been overwhelmed by absurdities, but by impious doctrines, which have made the Universal Father, now a weak and vain despot, to be propitiated by forms and flatteries, and now an almighty torturer, foreordaining multitudes of his creatures to guilt, and then glorifying his justice by their everlasting woe. When I think what Christianity has become in the hands of politicians and priests, how it has been shaped into a weapon of power, how it has crushed the human soul for ages, how it has struck the intellect with palsy and haunted the imagination with superstitious phantoms, how it has broken whole nations to the yoke, and frowned on every free thought; when I think how, under almost every form of this religion, its ministers have taken it into their own keeping, have hewn and compressed it into the shape of rigid creeds, and have then pursued by menaces of everlasting woe whoever should question the divinity of these works of their hands; when I consider, in a word, how, under such influences, Christianity has been and still is exhibited, in forms which shock alike the reason, conscience and heart, I feel deeply, painfully, what a different system it is from that which Jesus taught, and I dare not apply to unbelief the terms of condemnation which belonged to the infidelity of the primitive age.

"Perhaps I ought to go further. Perhaps I ought to say, that to reject Christianity under some of its corruptions is rather a virtue than a crime. At the present moment, I would ask, whether it is a vice to doubt the truth of Christianity, as it is manifested in Spain and Portugal? When a patriot in those benighted countries, who knows Christianity only as a bulwark of despotism, as a rearer of inquisitions, as a stern jailer immuring wretched woman in the convent, as an executioner stained and reeking with the blood of the friends of freedom; I say, when the patriot, who sees in our religion the instrument of these crimes and woes, believes and affirms that it is not

from God, are we authorized to charge his unbelief on dishonesty and corruption of mind, and to brand him as a culprit? May it not be that the spirit of Christianity in his heart emboldens him to protest with his lips against what bears the name? And if he thus protest, through a deep sympathy with the oppression and sufferings of his race, is he not nearer the kingdom of God than the priest and inquisitor who boastingly and exclusively assume the Christian name? Jesus Christ has told us, that 'this is the condemnation' of the unbelieving, 'that they love darkness rather than light;' and who does not see, that this ground of condemnation is removed just in proportion as the light is quenched, or Christian truth is buried in darkness and debasing error?"—*Works*, III. 324, 325.

Again,

"The unbeliever would gain unspeakably by parting with every possession for the truth which he doubts or rejects. And how shall we win him to the faith? Not by reproach, by scorn, by tones of superiority; but by paying due respect to his understanding, his virtues, and his right of private judgment; by setting before him Christianity in its simple majesty, its reasonableness, and wonderful adaptation to the wants of our spiritual nature; by exhibiting its proofs without exaggeration, yet in their full strength; and, above all, by shewing in our own characters and lives, that there is in Christianity a power to purify, elevate and console, which can be found in no human teaching. These are the true instruments of conversion. The ignorant and superstitious may indeed be driven into a religion by menace and reproach. But the reflecting unbeliever cannot but distrust a cause which admits such weapons. He must be reasoned with as a man, an equal, and a brother. Perhaps we may silence him for a time, by spreading through the community a fanatical excitement and a persecuting hatred of infidelity. But as by such processes Christianity would be made to take a more unlovely and irrational form, its secret foes would be multiplied, its brightest evidence would be dimmed, its foundations sapped, its energy impaired; and

whenever the time should arrive for throwing off the mask (and that time would come), we should learn, that in the very ranks of its nominal disciples there had been trained a host of foes, who would burn to prostrate the intolerant faith which had so long sealed their lips, and trampled on the rights and freedom of the human mind."—*Works*, III. 327, 328.

IX.—P. 28.

CALVINISM.

"A large number, perhaps a majority, of those who surname themselves with the name of Calvin, have little more title to it than ourselves. They keep the name, and drop the principles which it signifies. They adhere to the system as a whole, but shrink from all its parts and distinguishing points. This silent but real defection from Calvinism is spreading more and more widely. The grim features of this system are softening, and its stern spirit yielding to conciliation and charity. We beg our readers to consult for themselves the two Catechisms and the Confession of the Westminster Assembly, and to compare these standards of Calvinism with what now bears its name. They will rejoice, we doubt not, in the triumphs of truth. With these views, we have no disposition to disparage the professors of the system which we condemn, although we believe that its influence is yet so extensive and pernicious as to bind us to oppose it.

"Calvinism, we are persuaded, is giving place to better views. It has passed its meridian, and is sinking, to rise no more. It has to contend with foes more formidable than theologians, with foes from whom it cannot shield itself in mystery and metaphysical subtleties, we mean with the progress of the human mind, and with the progress of the spirit of the Gospel. Society is going forward in intelligence and charity, and of course is leaving the theology of the sixteenth century behind it. We hail this revolution of opinion as a most auspicious event to the Christian cause. We hear much at present of efforts to spread the Gospel. But Christianity is gaining more by the removal of degrading errors, than it would by

armies of missionaries who should carry with them a corrupted form of the religion. We think the decline of Calvinism one of the most encouraging facts in our passing history; for this system, by outraging conscience and reason, tends to array these high faculties against revelation. Its errors are peculiarly mournful, because they relate to the character of God. It darkens and stains his pure nature; spoils his character of its sacredness, loveliness, glory; and thus quenches the central light of the universe, makes existence a curse, and the extinction of it a consummation devoutly to be wished. We now speak of the *peculiarities* of this system, and of their natural influence, when not counteracted, as they always are in a greater or less degree, by better views, derived from the spirit and plain lessons of Christianity."—*Works*, I. 252, 253.

X.—P. 28.

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

"But I need not in this town urge the importance of study. Can a minister breathe the atmosphere in which Edwards lived, and content himself with taking passively what others teach? I exhort you to visit the spot were Edwards brought forth his profound works; and let the spiritual presence of that intensest thinker of the new world and of the age in which he lived, stir you up to energy of thought. His name has shed a consecration over this place. In many things indeed you differ from him; but you will not therefore reverence the less his single-hearted and unwearied devotion of his great powers to the investigation of truth; and in the wide and continued influence of his writings you will learn, that secret study, silent thought, is after all the mightiest agent in human affairs."—*Works*, V. 309, 310.

XI.—P. 32.

UNITARIANISM ALONE MAINTAINS THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

"Now, Unitarianism concurs with this sublime moral purpose of God. It asserts his spirituality. It approaches him under no bodily form, but as a pure Spirit, as the infinite and universal Mind. On the other hand, it is the direct influence

of Trinitarianism to materialize men's conceptions of God; and, in truth, this system is a relapse into the error of the rudest and earliest ages, into the worship of a corporeal God. Its leading feature is, the doctrine of a God clothed with a body, and acting and speaking through a material frame,—of the Infinite Divinity dying on a cross; a doctrine which in earthliness reminds us of the mythology of the rudest Pagans, and which a pious Jew, in the twilight of the Mosaic religion, would have shrunk from with horror. It seems to me no small objection to the Trinity, that it supposes God to take a body in the later and more improved ages of the world, when it is plain that such a manifestation, if needed at all, was peculiarly required in the infancy of the race. The effect of such a system in debasing the idea of God, in associating with the Divinity human passions and infirmities, is too obvious to need much elucidation. On the supposition that the second person of the Trinity became incarnate, God may be said to be a material being, on the same general ground on which this is affirmed of man; for man is material only by the union of the mind with the body; and the very meaning of incarnation is, that God took a body, through which he acted and spoke, as the human soul operates through its corporeal organs. Every bodily affection may thus be ascribed to God. Accordingly, the Trinitarian, in his most solemn act of adoration, is heard to pray in these appalling words—'Good Lord, deliver us; by the mystery of thy holy incarnation, by thy holy nativity and circumcision, by thy baptism, fasting and temptation, by thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, good Lord, deliver us.' Now I ask you to judge, from the principles of human nature, whether to worshipers, who adore their God for his wounds and tears, his agony, and blood, and sweat, the idea of corporeal existence and human suffering will not predominate over the conceptions of a purely spiritual essence; whether the mind, in clinging to the man, will not lose the God; whether a surer method for depressing and adulterating the pure thought of the Divinity could have been devised. That the Trinitarian is unconscious of this influence of his faith, I know, nor do I charge it on him

as a crime. Still it exists, and cannot be too much deplored." *Works*, III. 173, 174.

XII.—P. 32.

TRINITARIANISM DESTROYS THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

"But the worst has not been told. I observe, then, that if Three Divine Persons are believed in, such an administration or government of the world must be ascribed to them, as will furnish them with a sphere of operation. No man will admit three persons into his creed, without finding a use for them. Now it is an obvious remark, that a system of the universe which involves and demands more than one Infinite Agent, must be wild, extravagant, and unworthy the perfect God; because there is no possible or conceivable good to which such an agent is not adequate. Accordingly, we find Trinitarianism connecting itself with a scheme of administration exceedingly derogatory to the Divine character. It teaches, that the Infinite Father saw fit to put into the hands of our first parents the character and condition of their whole progeny; and that, through one act of disobedience, the whole race bring with them into being a corrupt nature, or are born depraved. It teaches, that the offences of a short life, though begun and spent under this disastrous influence, merit endless punishment, and that God's law threatens this infinite penalty; and that man is thus burdened with a guilt, which no sufferings of the created universe can expiate, which nothing but the sufferings of an Infinite Being can purge away. In this condition of human nature, Trinitarianism finds a sphere of action for its different persons. I am aware that some Trinitarians, on hearing this statement of their system, may reproach me with ascribing to them the errors of Calvinism, a system which they abhor as much as ourselves. But none of the peculiarities of Calvinism enter into this exposition. I have given what I understand to be the leading features of Trinitarianism all the world over; and the benevolent professors of that faith, who recoil from this statement, must blame not the preacher, but the creeds and establishments by which these doctrines are diffused. For ourselves, we look with horror and grief on the views of God's

government which are naturally and intimately united with Trinitarianism. They take from us our Father in heaven, and substitute a stern and unjust lord. Our filial love and reverence rise up against them. We say to the Trinitarian, Touch any thing but the perfections of God. Cast no stain on that spotless purity and loveliness. We can endure any errors but those which subvert or unsettle the conviction of God's paternal goodness. Urge not upon us a system which makes existence a curse, and wraps the universe in gloom. Leave us the cheerful light, the free and healthful atmosphere, of a liberal and rational faith, the ennobling and consoling influences of the doctrine, which nature and revelation in blessed concord teach us, of One Father of boundless and inexhaustible love."—*Works*, III. 181, 182.

XIII.—P. 32.

UNITARIANISM IN AGREEMENT WITH NATURE.

"Unitarianism is in accordance with nature. It teaches One Father, and so does creation, the more it is explored. Philosophy, in proportion as it extends its views of the universe, sees in it, more and more, a sublime and beautiful unity, and multiplies proofs, that all things have sprung from one intelligence, one power, one love. The whole outward creation proclaims to the Unitarian the truth in which he delights. So does his own soul. But neither nature nor the soul bears one trace of Three Divine Persons. Nature is no Trinitarian. It gives not a hint, not a glimpse of a tri-personal author. Trinitarianism is a confined system, shut up in a few texts, a few written lines, where many of the wisest minds have failed to discover it. It is not inscribed on the heavens and the earth, not borne on every wind, not resounding and re-echoing through the universe. The sun and stars say nothing of a God of three persons. They all speak of the One Father whom we adore. To *our* ears, one and the same voice comes from God's word and works, a full and swelling strain, growing clearer, louder, more thrilling as we listen, and with one blessed influence lifting up our souls to the Almighty Father."—*Works*, III. 183.

XIV.—P. 32.

FATHERLY CHARACTER OF GOD, ON THE UNITARIAN SYSTEM.

"To give our views of God in one word, we believe in his parental character. We ascribe to him, not only the name, but the dispositions and principles of a Father. We believe that he has a father's concern for his creatures, a father's desire for their improvement, a father's equity in proportioning his commands to their powers, a father's joy in their progress, a father's readiness to receive the penitent, and a father's justice for the incorrigible. We look upon this world as a place of education, in which he is training men by prosperity and adversity, by aids and obstructions, by conflicts of reason and passion, by motives to duty and temptations to sin, by a various discipline suited to free and moral beings, for union with himself, and for a sublime and ever-growing virtue in heaven.

"Now, we object to the systems of religion which prevail among us, that they are adverse, in a greater or less degree, to these purifying, comforting and honourable views of God; that they take from us our Father in heaven, and substitute for him a being whom we cannot love if we would, and whom we ought not to love if we could. We object, particularly on this ground, to that system which arrogates to itself the name of Orthodoxy, and which is now industriously propagated through our country. This system indeed takes various shapes, but in all it casts dishonour on the Creator. According to its old and genuine form, it teaches, that God brings us into life wholly depraved, so that under the innocent features of our childhood is hidden a nature averse to all good and propense to all evil, a nature which exposes us to God's displeasure and wrath, even before we have acquired power to understand our duties, or to reflect upon our actions. According to a more modern exposition, it teaches, that we came from the hands of our Maker with such a constitution, and are placed under such influences and circumstances, as to render certain and infallible the total depravity of every human being, from the first moment of his moral agency; and it also teaches, that the offence of

the child, who brings into life this ceaseless tendency to unmingled crime, exposes him to the sentence of everlasting damnation. Now, according to the plainest principles of morality, we maintain, that a natural constitution of the mind, unfailingly disposing it to evil and to evil alone, would absolve it from guilt; that to give existence under this condition would argue unspeakable cruelty; and that to punish the sin of this unhappily constituted child with endless ruin, would be a wrong unparalleled by the most merciless despotism!"—*Works*, III. 85, 86.

XV.—P. 32.

POPULAR DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

"We can endure no shade over the pure goodness of God. We earnestly maintain, that Jesus, instead of calling forth in any way or degree the mercy of the Father, was sent by that mercy, to be our Saviour; that he is nothing to the human race but what he is by God's appointment; that he communicates nothing but what God empowers him to bestow; that our Father in heaven is originally, essentially, and eternally placable and disposed to forgive; and that his unborrowed, underived and unchangeable love, is the only fountain of what flows to us through his Son. We conceive that Jesus is dishonoured, not glorified, by ascribing to him an influence which clouds the splendour of Divine benevolence."—*Works*, III. 90.

XVI.—P. 32.

THE SAME.

"We farther agree in rejecting, as unscriptural and absurd, the explanation given by the popular system, of the manner in which Christ's death procures forgiveness for men. This system used to teach as its fundamental principle, that man, having sinned against an Infinite Being, has contracted infinite guilt, and is consequently exposed to an infinite penalty. We believe, however, that this reasoning, if reasoning it may be called, which overlooks the obvious maxim, that the guilt of a being must be proportioned to his nature and powers, has fallen into disuse. Still the system teaches, that sin, of what-

ever degree, exposes to endless punishment, and that the whole human race, being infallibly involved by their nature in sin, owe this awful penalty to the justice of their Creator. It teaches, that this penalty cannot be remitted, in consistency with the honour of the divine law, unless a substitute be found to endure it or to suffer an equivalent. It also teaches, that, from the nature of the case, no substitute is adequate to this work, save the infinite God himself; and accordingly, God, in his second person, took on himself human nature, that he might pay to his own justice the debt of punishment incurred by men, and might thus reconcile forgiveness with the claims and threatenings of his law. Such is the prevalent system. Now, to us, this doctrine seems to carry on its front strong marks of absurdity, and we maintain that Christianity ought not to be encumbered with it, unless it be laid down in the New Testament fully and expressly. We ask our adversaries, then, to point to some plain passages where it is taught. We ask for one text in which we are told that God took human nature, that he might make an infinite satisfaction to his own justice; for one text, which tells us, that human guilt requires an infinite substitute; that Christ's sufferings owe their efficacy to their being borne by an infinite being; or that his divine nature gives infinite value to the sufferings of the human. Not *one word* of this description can we find in the Scriptures; not a text which even hints at these strange doctrines. They are altogether, we believe, the fictions of theologians. Christianity is in no degree responsible for them. We are astonished at their prevalence. What can be plainer than that God cannot, in any sense, be a sufferer, or bear a penalty in the room of his creatures? How dishonourable to him is the supposition, that his justice is now so severe, as to exact infinite punishment for the sins of frail and feeble men, and now so easy and yielding, as to accept the limited pains of Christ's human soul, as a full equivalent for the endless woes due from the world! How plain is it also, according to this doctrine, that God, instead of being plenteous in forgiveness, never forgives; for it seems absurd to speak of men as forgiven, when their whole punish-

There is much reason to believe that Christianity is at this moment dishonoured by gross and cherished corruptions. If you remember the darkness which hung over the Gospel for ages; if you consider the impure union which still subsists in almost every Christian country between the Church and the State, and which enlists men's selfishness and ambition on the side of established error; if you recollect in what degree the spirit of intolerance has checked free inquiry, not only before, but since the Reformation; you will see that Christianity cannot have freed itself from all the human inventions which disfigured it under the Papal tyranny. No. Much stubble is yet to be burned; much rubbish to be removed; many gaudy decorations, which a false taste has hung around Christianity, must be swept away; and the earth-born fogs, which have long shrouded it, must be scattered, before this divine fabric will rise before us in its native and awful majesty, in its harmonious proportions, in its mild and celestial splendours. This glorious reformation in the church, we hope, under God's blessing, from the progress of the human intellect, from the moral progress of society, from the consequent decline of prejudice and bigotry, and, though last not least, from the subversion of human authority in matters of religion, from the fall of those hierarchies, and other human institutions, by which the minds of individuals are oppressed under the weight of numbers, and a Papal dominion is perpetuated in the Protestant church. Our earnest prayer to God is, that he will overturn, and overturn, and overturn the strongholds of spiritual usurpation, until He shall come whose right it is to rule the minds of men; that the conspiracy of ages against the liberty of Christians may be brought to an end; that the servile assent, so long yielded to human creeds, may give place to honest and devout inquiry into the Scriptures; and that Christianity, thus purified from error, may put forth its almighty energy, and prove itself, by its ennobling influence on the mind, to be indeed 'the power of God unto salvation.'"—*Works*, III. 102, 103.

NOTES.

A.—P. 9.

These lines will be recognized as Gray's. They were amongst the stanzas in his first MS. of the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," which his fastidious taste led him to reject on the publication of the poem. Mr. Mason thought them equal to any in the Elegy.

B.—P. 11.

See his masterly sketches of the characters of Drs. Styles and Hopkins, in the "Discourse on Christian Worship," from which an extract is taken into the Sermon (pp. 11—13).

Dr. Ezra Styles was pastor of the Second Congregational Church at Newport, R. I., and aftewards President of Yale College. He was an ardent friend of liberty, as he has shewn in a little volume giving an account of the Regicides who fled from England on the Restoration, and found shelter in the Colonies. Dr. Channing says of him,—"In his faith he was what was called a moderate Calvinist; but his heart was of no sect. He carried into his religion the spirit of liberty which then stirred the whole country. Intolerance, church-tyranny, in all its forms, he abhorred. He respected the right of private judgment where others would have thought themselves authorized to restrain it. A young man, to whom he had been as a father, one day communicated to him doubts concerning the Trinity. He expressed his sorrow; but mildly, and with undiminished affection, told him to go to the Scriptures, and to seek his faith there and only there."—Works, IV. 343, 344.

Dr. Hopkins was at the head of the most rigid branch of the Calvinistic sect in America. "His doctrines"—says Dr. Channing, in a note to the Sermon quoted above, (Works, IV. 354, 355,)—"threw dark colours over the world around him; but he took refuge from the present state of things in the Millennium." "Whilst to the multitude he seemed a hard, dry theologian, feeding on the thorns

of controversy, he was living in a region of imagination, feeding on visions of a holiness and a happiness which are to make earth all but heaven.—It has been my privilege" (Dr. Channing adds) "to meet with other examples of the same character, with men who, amidst privation, under bodily infirmity, and with none of those materials of enjoyment which the multitude are striving for, live in a world of thought, and enjoy what affluence never dreamed of,—men having nothing, yet possessing all things; and the sight of such men has done me more good, has spoken more to my head and heart, than many sermons and volumes. I have learned the sufficiency of the mind to itself, its independence on outward things."

C.—P. 16.

In several places of his Works, Dr. Channing has described with ingenuousness and simplicity the intellectual process that during many years he was undergoing. The result is before us; a fine illustration of the lofty verses of the philosophic poet, Gray, in his "Fragment" on "Education," &c., which Mr. Gibbon, lamenting the unfinished state of the poem, pronounces "an exquisite specimen of the powers of his genius:"

> "And where the face of nature laughs around,
> Must sick'ning virtue fly the tainted ground?
> Unmanly thought! What seasons can control,
> What fancied zone can circumscribe the soul,
> Who, conscious of the source from whence she springs,
> By reason's light, on resolution's wings,
> Spite of her frail companion, dauntless goes
> O'er Libya's deserts and through Zembla's snows?
> She bids each slumb'ring energy awake,
> Another touch, another temper take,
> Suspends th' inferior laws that rule our clay;
> The stubborn elements confess her sway;
> Their little wants, their low desires, refine,
> And raise the mortal to a height divine."

M. Guizot, the present Prime Minister of France, had such a character, and so formed, as Dr. Channing's in view, when he said, in one of his Lectures on Civilization, (I am sorry that I have not the original, and can quote only a bald translation printed at Oxford, 1838, 8vo, p. 185,) "Take the life of any man ———. He enters upon his career; he pushes forward in life and rises; great circumstances act upon him, he acts upon great circumstances. He arrives at the end of all things—*and then it is we know him.* But it is in

his whole character; it is as a complete, a finished piece; such in a manner as he is turned out, after a long labour, from the workshop of Providence."

D.—P. 20.

In the Edinburgh Review, to which I have alluded in the Sermon, there is an unsparing critique on Dr. Channing's style (April, 1839, Vol. LXIX. pp. 214—230). While I agree, as I have stated, with the reviewer, in his protest against the supposition of Milton's being purposely obscure and entertaining in his stately periods an occult sense, and also against the strange dictum of Dr. Channing, that "to be universally intelligible is not the highest merit" in an author,—and while I admit that every sentence which he has written will not stand the test of a rigid analysis, like the reviewer's, (which indeed his own composition in this article would not bear,)—I must be allowed to say that his animadversions are in some particulars glaringly unfair. He connects Dr. Channing's name in the title of the article with "False Taste," and proceeds under this head to point out and reprobate vices in style, with which he allows, in so many words, that Dr. Channing is not chargeable. It may be true of his diction, as of that of most writers not springing from the old English soil, that it has "nothing racy or idiomatic," but it is in my judgment not true of his style generally that it is "heavy and pompous," and (with the exception of idiom) "far enough from the pure Saxon phrase." The reviewer himself allows that the language of Dr. Channing is "at least of the standard currency."

But, to rise from words to things, does not the critic fall into a more serious error than any which he thinks he has detected in Dr. Channing's style, when he calls it "nonsense" to "speak of reverencing our own natures as a duty"? In what school of moral philosophy has he taken his lessons?

The reviewer touches the true character of Dr. Channing's mind, when he represents him as addicted to "self-contemplation." But will it be believed that he attempts to throw ridicule upon this habit of all great minds, and that he includes in his censure of "this absurd fancy," Mr. Wordsworth as well as Dr. Channing? What he says in dispraise of the English poet, the admirers of the American divine are quite willing to accept as the true description of the latter,—but, in a sense far above the reviewer's conception:—"He seems hardly to have studied any other sample of human nature than himself; and he draws all his pictures after that model."

E.—P. 21.

Of Dr. Channing's boldness in standing forth as the negroes' friend, a very able and highly-esteemed female writer, of kindred spirit, and with the best opportunities of estimating his peculiar merit in this respect, Miss Martineau, has given the following account, which, if indeed any other testimony to its correctness were needed than the author's own character, bears upon the face of it evidences of truth.

"No one out of the United States can have an idea of the merit of taking the part which Dr. Channing has adopted on this question. Abroad, whatever may be thought of the merits of the productions, the act of producing them does not seem great. It appears a simple affair enough for an influential clergyman to declare his detestation of outrageous injustice and cruelty, and to point out the duty of his fellow-citizens to do it away. But it is not a very easy or simple matter on the spot. Dr. Channing lives surrounded by the aristocracy of Boston, and by the most eminent of the clergy of his own denomination, whose lips are rarely opened on the question except to blame or ridicule the Abolitionists. The whole matter was, at that time, considered 'a low subject,' and one not likely, therefore, to reach his ears. He dislikes associations for moral objects: he dislikes bustle and ostentation: he dislikes personal notoriety; and, of course, he likes no better than other people to be the object of censure, of popular dislike. He broke through all these temptations to silence, the moment his convictions were settled;—I mean not his convictions of the guilt and evil of slavery, but of its being his duty to utter his voice against it. From his peaceful and honoured retirement he came out into the storm, which might and probably would be fatal to his reputation, his influence, his repose,—and, perhaps, to more blessings than even these."—*Retrospect of Western Travel*, Vol. III. pp. 78, 79.

"Dr. Channing bore admirably the wrath he drew upon himself by breaking silence on the slavery question. Popular hatred and the censure of men whom he respected were a totally new experience to one who had lived in the midst of something like worship: and though they reached him only from a distance, they must have made him feel that the new path he had at his years struck into was a thorny one. He was not careless of censure, though he took it quietly. He read the remarks made in Congress on his book, re-examined the grounds of what he had said that was questioned, about the morals of the South, with the intention of retracting any thing which he might have stated too strongly. Finding that he

had in his assertions kept within the truth, he appeared satisfied. But he could feel for others who were exposed in the same cause."—*Id.* pp. 80, 81.

F.—P. 23.

Miss Martineau, who had the enviable honour of Dr. Channing's intimacy when she was in America, and was peculiarly qualified by her own character to form a true estimate of his richly-endowed mind, begins her delineation of him by describing one prominent feature of his intellectual make, viz. "Spirituality." She may intend the word in a philosophical rather than a religious sense, but in both senses it is, I conceive, justly applicable. The reader will be pleased to see the whole passage to which this opening remark leads. It is a beautiful picture of a man great by means of goodness, of both moral and spiritual goodness.

"The one remarkable thing about him is his spirituality; and this is shown in a way which must strike the most careless observer, but of which he is himself unconscious. He is not generally unconscious: his manner, indeed, betokens a remarkable self-consciousness, but he is not aware of what is highest in himself, though painfully so of some other things. Every one who converses with him is struck with his natural, supreme regard to the true and the right; with the absence of all suspicion that any thing can stand in competition with these. In this there is an exemption from all professional narrowness,—from all priestly prejudice. He is not a man of the world: anxious as he is to inform himself of matters of fact, and of the present condition of affairs every where, he does not succeed well; and this deficiency, and a considerable amount of prejudice on philosophical subjects, are the cause of his being extensively supposed to be more than ordinarily professional in his views, judgments and conduct. But in this I do not agree; nor does any one, I believe, who knows him. No one sees more clearly than he the necessity of proving and exercising principles by hourly action in all kinds of worldly business. No one is more free from attachment to forms, or more practically convinced that rules and institutions are mere means to an end. He showed this, in one instance out of a thousand, by proposing to his congregation, some time ago, that they should not always depend on their pastors for the guidance of their worship, but that any members who had any thing to say should offer to do so. As might have been foreseen, every one shrank from being concerned in so new an administration of religion; but Dr. Channing was disappointed that the effort was not made.—No one, again, is more free from all pride of virtue. His charity

towards frailty is as singular as his reprobation of spiritual vices is indignant. The genial side of his nature is turned to the weak; and the sorely tempted and the fallen best know the real softness and meekness of his character. He is a high example of the natural union of lofty spirituality with the tenderest sympathy with those who are the least able to attain it. If the fallen need the help of one into whose face they would look without fear, Dr. Channing is that one,—even though he may be felt to be 'repulsive' by those who have no particular claim upon his kindness: and as for spiritual pride,—when it has once passed his credulity, and got within the observation of his shrewdness, it had better be gone out of the reach of his rebuke.

"It may be seen that I feel the prevalent fear of him to be ill-grounded. There is little gratification to one's self-complacency to be expected in his presence. He never flatters, and he is more ready to blame than to praise; but his blame, like every other man's, should go for what it is worth; should be welcome in as far as it is deserved, and should pass for nothing where it is not. But there is no assumption and no bitterness in his blame: it is merely the expression of an opinion: and it leaves no sting. All intercourse with him proceeds on the supposition that the parties are not caring about their petty selves, but about truth and good; and that all are equal while engaged in this pursuit. There is no room for mutual fear in such a case. He one day asked an intimate friend, a woman of great simplicity and honesty, some question about a sermon he had just delivered. She replied that she could not satisfy him, because she had not been able to attend to the sermon after the first sentence or two; and he was far better pleased with the answer than with the flatteries which are sometimes addressed to him about his preaching. This lady's method is that in which Dr. Channing's intimate friends speak to him, and not as to a man who is to be feared."—*Western Travel*, III. 85—88.

G.—P. 23.

His funeral discourses are addresses from and to the heart, overflowing with pious and Christian feeling,—particularly his sermons in memory of Dr. Tuckerman and Dr. Follen; the latter, however, somewhat tinged with gloom, naturally taking its hue from the calamitous occasion: in this and other respects it resembles the late Mr. Hall's celebrated Oration on the Death of the Princess Charlotte.

H.—P. 25.

See this glowing passage in the Preface to the first edition of his Works, dated Boston, April, 1830, reprinted in the third Glasgow edition, the Preface to which by himself is dated Boston, March 27, 1839.

I.—P. 26.

Quarterly Review, Jan. 1823, Vol. XXVIII. p. 535. In a previous page of the same Art., (on the "Progress of Infidelity,") p. 510, the writer had said, (with an insolence and folly which his reference to the French Encyclopedists cannot excuse,)—"we are thankful for the word *(Liberal)*,—it is well that we should have one which will at once express whatever is detestable in principle and flagitious in conduct."

J.—P. 27.

The Petition may be seen in the *Monthly Repository*, (O. S.,) Vol. XVIII. pp. 362—364, and the discussion upon it in the House of Commons, in the same volume, pp. 485—494.

K.—P. 30.

Dr. Channing's *note* and Mr. Belsham's strictures upon it will be found in *Monthly Repository*, (O. S.,) Vol. XIX. pp. 678—681,—Mr. Cogan's in the same work, Vol. XX. pp. 7—9.

L.—P. 38.

That I may not even seem for a moment to wrong Dr. Channing in this matter, I shall extract the account of it given by the eminent lady already quoted, Miss Martineau, who was not only a friend of the Doctor's, but was for a time an inmate of his family, and probably conversed with him upon the subject. In the chapter entitled "Priestley," in Vol. I. of "Western Travel," pp. 186—189, she says,—"Before I went to America I was aware that the Unitarians there, who ought to know every thing about the apostle of their faith who took refuge in their country, were so far in the dark about him, as that they misapprehended his philosophy, and misrepresented its tendencies in a way and to a degree which seemed irreconcileable with the means of information within their reach. I knew that Dr. Channing's celebrated note on Priestley remained unretracted,—though rebuked on the spot, with much spirit and tenderness, by a then young divine, who better understood the Christian sage. I knew that the tendency of this sect in America to lean upon authority,—with some other causes,—must indispose them to do justice to Priestley. But till I was among them, I had no idea that it was possible for those of them who were not ignorant of the character of the philosopher to allow their fear and dislike of some of his convictions to render them so insensible as they are to the majesty of the man. They themselves would deny the insensibility, and point to this and that testimony to Priestley being a well-meaning man, which may be found in their

publications. But facts show what the insensibility is. Dr. Channing speaks of him now in a tone of patronage, admitting that he is under obligations to him for one or two detached sermons which breathe the true spirit. Another clergyman puts forth a small volume of selections from Priestley's works, with an apologetical preface, which states, that whatever Priestley's doctrines and writings may have been as a whole, there are portions which may be picked out for people to profit by. Such facts show that the character and mission of the man are not understood. Priestley was, above most men, one who came at a right point of time to accomplish a particular service; to break up the reliance on authority in matters of opinion and conscience, and insensibly to show, in an age when prejudice and denial were at fierce war, how noble and touching is the free and fervent and disinterested pursuit of truth. His character is to everlasting; but his writings are, for the most part, suitable to only a particular position of affairs, a critical social state. Those who, like the Americans, are unprepared for—alienated from—his philosophy, and who are remarkable for their dependence on authority in matters of opinion, cannot possibly sympathise with Priestley's convictions; and a full appreciation of him ought not to be expected of them. But they had better, in such a position of circumstances, let his works alone. It is not necessary or desirable that they should study writings to which no impulse of sympathy or admiration leads them; but it is most desirable that they should not speak and write apologetically and patronisingly of one of the largest-minded and most single-hearted of sages. In the transition which the religious and philosophical society of America has to make, from reliance on authority to a state of individual research and conviction, the philosopher may or may not yet become an apostle to them. In their present condition he cannot be so. The warmest friends of both see that it cannot be so. They only desire that his reputation should be left unvisited as his remains; and that while no traveller is drawn aside from his path to seek the philosopher's tomb, no presumptuous hand should offer to endorse his merits, or push the claims to partial approbation of one who was created to command reverent discipleship; reverent discipleship in the pursuit of truth, if not in the reception of doctrine."—In the chapter entitled "Channing," in the IIIrd volume, pp. 88, 89, before quoted, Miss Martineau says,—"I have mentioned prejudice on philosophical subjects to be a drawback on his liberality. This might have been the remark of a perfect stranger, as long as his celebrated note on Priestley remains unretracted in public, - whatever he may say about it in private. His attachment to the poetry of philosophy,—the mysticism prevalent

among the divines of New England who study philosophy at all,—and his having taken no means to review his early decisions against the philosophers of another school, are the cause of a prejudice as to the grounds, and an illiberality as to the tendencies of any other mental philosophy than his own, the results of which are exhibited in that note. This is not the only instance in Dr. Channing's life, as in the lives of other cautious men, where undue caution has led to rashness. His reason for writing that note was a fear lest, the American Unitarians being already too cold, they should be made colder by philosophical sympathy with the Unitarians of England. This fear led to the rashness of concluding the English Unitarians to be generally disciples of Priestley: of attributing to Priestley's philosophy the coldness of the English Unitarians: and of concluding Priestley to be the perfect exponent of the philosophy which the American divines of Dr. Channing's way of thinking declare to be opposed to spiritualism."

M.—P. 32.

While I feel bound to testify that Dr. Channing has nobly vindicated the Paternal character of the Almighty, I cannot forbear remarking that he and our Transatlantic Unitarian brethren in general appear to me to have been somewhat backward in the confutation of the popular doctrine of Eternal Torments, with the truth of which the Divine Benevolence cannot consist. The silence of these distinguished advocates of the pure Gospel upon this fearfully-important subject may, perhaps, be explained by their being confronted by a branch of the sect of Universalists, scarcely known in this country, who deny all future punishment, and explain the texts of scripture commonly supposed to refer to the retribution of the world to come, as relating solely to the discipline of the present life, which they believe involves the certain and adequate punishment of all unrighteousness. Of the moral state of this sect I have no means of judging; but from a little acquaintance with their books, I am constrained to admit, (while I am very far from them in opinion,) that they seem not deficient in learning or power of argument, and that some of their novel expositions of the Bible are ingenious and even plausible. Let me add, that I do not blame my American brethren for being careful not to be confounded, in public estimation, with the Universalists: I am only attempting to account for what appears to me a little reserve in the declaration of their opinion on a point of doctrine which in my humble judgment has done more injury than any other to Christianity, by driving men into unbelief or making them unhappy in their faith.

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